

Constructively engaging in post-dogmatic Dogmatics

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Post-dogmatic Dogmatics? What does it entail?

The primary aim of dogmatic-ethical reflection in the Department of Dogmatics and Christian Ethics at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria, is ultimately to destroy, to annihilate the faith relationships of our students. And if we at first do not succeed at this, then we put in a special effort to at least blur their understandings and visions of faith and the content of faith to a point of senseless confusion and uncertainty.

I trust I do have your attention.

No. 3x No. My students will know that a 3x no is the most powerful No that a reformed theologian can give to any question from which he or she differs. I call it a Trinitarian no. Because it is a No in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Thrice No. To destroy the faith relationships / to blur faith understandings is definitely not the primary aim of dogmatic-ethical reflection in the Department. However, many outsiders to our Department may see the constructive-critical reflection that takes place in the Department, in this manner. They – that is, these outsiders – stand oppose to any form of critical reflection / thinking. Sometimes some of them respond harshly in public to such critical reflection, rejecting it out rightly. More often others respond with a rather self-contend pietistic smile, saying: The Lord expects only a childlike faith. What are you talking about when the mention is of a childlike faith?? If a childlike faith entails simply believing everything you are told by whoever is in a position of authority, if it entails holding for true any conviction – even if it does not make sense to you – a conviction that is part of your tradition in which you stand and - in your opinion – should not be questioned: that is not a childlike faith. That is simply subjecting yourself to ideology. More crudely formulated: Drowning yourself in a pool of non-sense. No. Then the words of the song Suzanne of the Canadian singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen – who at the age of 80 has released his 13th album in Sept 2014 – rings true:

“And Jesus was a sailor
When he walked upon the water
And he spent a long time watching
From his lonely wooden tower
And when he knew for certain
Only drowning men could see him
He said "All men will be sailors then
Until the sea shall free them"

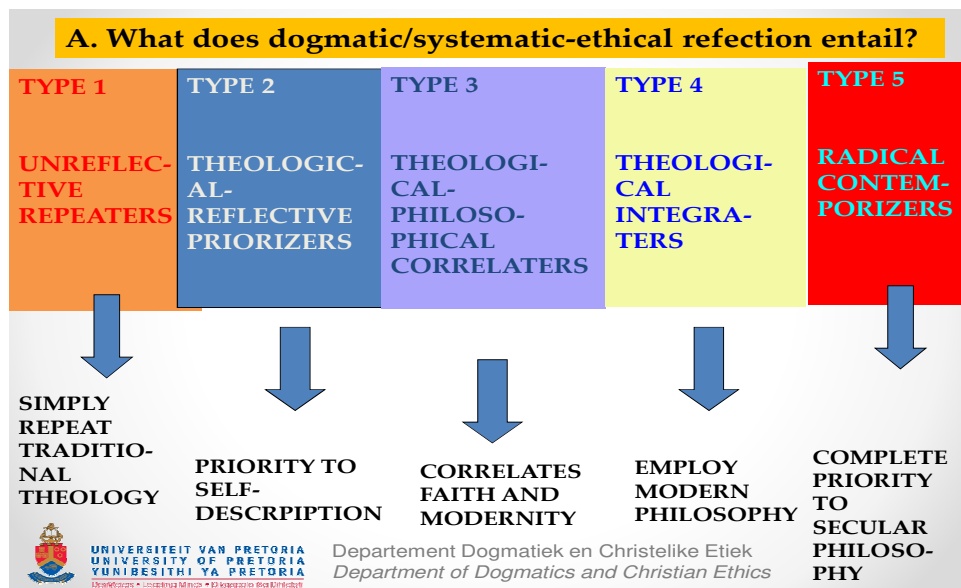
The Lord does ask of us a childlike faith, its true. But then: A childlike faith as a deep dependency on and recognition of the utter Holiness of God. Dependency and Holiness. And a deep (hermeneutical) respect for life. All life. Deep respect for the Other – for that which is different from me / from my own convictions. Not rejection or abandonment of / not resentment in critical reflection. No. That is not what a childlike faith demands of us. Dogmatic-ethical reflection entails explications of our living faith relationships and fellowship with God and with our neighbors and with the world in a scientific, critical and responsible manner. It is in the words of 1 Peter 3:15: to give an account of the hope that lives within us. To give an account of the hope that lives within us in a methodological responsible manner. Accounts with integrity.

Mr Vice-Principal, prof Norman Duncan; Dean, prof Johan Buitendag; colleagues, students, family and friends: my apologies for the long introduction before I have even said “Good Evening”, but it was necessary! To share with you tonight as HOD the Department’s academic research contributions and vision is a wonderful academic privilege. To share with you – albeit in very broad and general terms - the bigger international and national picture and story of systematic-ethical trends [that is what I will attend to firstly] and lastly the Departments academic and research standing and objectives. Its always very difficult to find a good vantage point for such wide-ranging stories; for big pictures that one wants to convey in an insightful, coherent but then brief manner. Its almost like the young Irish student who got lost in the Irish countryside on his way to the Belfast International Airport. He just stopped at a point and asked a local farmer: “Excuse me sir, I am totally lost. How do I get from here to the Airport?”. The farmer look at him and asked: From here? You want to travel from here to the Airport? To the Belfast International Airport? Yes, the student said rather irritated. And the farmer answered real slowly: If I were you son, I would not start from here. Well, if one had to start somewhere which is also the case tonight, I would firstly like to address the question, namely what does dogmatic-ethical reflection entail if it is all about giving account of the hope that lives within us. And: what are the most important international and national trends in systematic-ethical reflection.

1. Firstly. What does – in very general terms – systematic-ethical reflection entail?
2. Secondly. What international and then national trends can be distinguished?

A: What does systematic-ethical reflection entail?

It is not that easy to explain. Partly because I suspect that many systematic theologians and ethicists within the broader Christian tradition – and now I include all groupings: Roman Catholic, Charismatic; Reformed etc - are themselves not always precisely sure / clear on what they are doing. Also partly because contextuality, historicity, personalities etc all come into reflective play – making the configurations and improvisations almost endless like - for example - piano music composed of only 88 notes. And in the case of the Reformed Bible: 66 books! But lets leave that at that. I will try to give an overview and explain what we do by means of an oversimplified typology (Developed by the Irish-British theologian David Ford). First a Typology and then – what I will call – reflective trends.



If you look at this table with the spectrum ranging from Type 1 (on your left side) to Type 5 (on your right side) as overview of what Systematic Theologians and Ethicists do. Tonight I will be using the words Systematic Theology and Dogmatics as synonyms although the latter is actually a more restrictive concept / a much more specifically focused discipline on doctrine. But not tonight.

1. Type 1: Unreflective repeaters

Unreflective repeaters simply attempt to repeat a traditional theology or version of Christianity or the doctrines of the Church as has been handed down to them and as they understand it. With that comes an understanding of our relationship / fellowship with God that excludes completely critical reflection, hermeneutical sensitivity for any other perspectives (than their own) and interpretative acknowledgment of recent events / influences. We find this especially in some of the Charismatic, Pentecostal orientated theologies.

2. Type 5: Radical contemporizers

They are Systematic Theologians that give complete priority to some modern secular philosophy or worldview, and Christianity in its own terms is only valid insofar as it fits in with that. Parts of Christian faith and practice may be found true or acceptable, but the assessment is always made according to criteria which are external to Christian understanding and which claim superiority to it.

3. Type 2: Theological-reflective priorizers

They give priority to the self-description of the Christian community and might be characterized by Anselm of Canterbury's motto of "faith seeking understanding". They insist that Christian identity is primary and that all other reality needs to be constructed in relation to it. But also that Christianity itself needs continually to be rethought and that theology must engage seriously with the modern world in its quest

for understanding. Examples of influential theologians: Barth / Bonhoeffer / Jüngel / Torrance / Rowan Williams/ Ecumenical and Evangelical positions

4. Type 3: Theological-philosophical correlaters

In the middle: theologies of correlation. They bring traditional Christian faith and understanding into dialogue with modernity and try to correlate the two in a variety of ways. They do not claim any overarching integration of Christianity and modernity – neither one that would subsume modernity within Christian terms nor one that would exhaustively present Christianity in specifically modern terms. Best well-known example is German American theologian Paul Tillich. In his approach it takes the form of the basic questions raised in contemporary life and thought being correlated with answers developed through interpretation of key Christian symbols. In a period of fragmentation and pluralism the method of correlation is especially attractive as a way of keeping going a range of open dialogue. Another example is the Belgian Roman Catholic theologian Edward Schillebeeckx.

5. Type 4: Theological Integraters

They use a particular – sometimes more than one - modern philosophy, conceptuality or problem as an explicit way of integrating Christianity with an understanding of modernity. They want to do justice to both and see the best way of doing this to be a consistent reinterpretation of Christianity in terms of some contemporary idiom or concern. Two very influential examples are the German theologians Rudolf Bultmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg.

Two short remarks on this typology model must suffice. Firstly. I know this is a rather oversimplified overview of the Systematic Theological enterprise, since there are just as many influential Systematic theologians and Ethicists that cannot easily be characterized in terms of this typology. Many approaches represent a complex mix; whereas other approaches oscillate between the “Types” that I have identified. Secondly. One has to keep in mind at the same time – if I take into an account a broader historical context - that one finds within these identified types varied ways in which the deep and layered impulses of previous historical periods have found positive and negative spinoffs as well as very personal elements.

Thus, to understand what Systematic Theologians and Ethicists do, it is not enough just to put them into a Typology; one has also to describe in broad terms what are characteristic of their reflective endeavors. I call it Reflective Trends. One has to add to the Typology, a Trend:

Typology + Trends = What Systematic Theologians and Ethicists do!

This brings me to my second question:

B: What international (B.1) and national (B.2) reflective trends can be distinguished?

On the international academic systematic-ethical theological scene stretching from America to Asia to Africa – that is, North and South discourses - there are at least five influential Reflective Trends (or discourses) that can be identified and described in very general terms. In my exposition I am also making use of the contribution of the Stellenbosch Reformed theologian Dirkie Smit which I have re-worked for my own purposes. I am going to do this overview in very general terms almost without any namedropping. After almost 30 years of theological reading, I really got to know a lot of names and I can impress you by rendering some of them. I am going to restrict myself to descriptions and perhaps just a few names here and there. Also keep in mind that these Reflective Trends are not completely exclusive but very often overlap.

Reflective Trends as a description that has to be added to the typologies:

1. To propose how contemporary challenges should be addressed (keywords: identify + address)
 2. React to the spirit of the times (keyword: problem awareness)
 3. Discursive engagement (keyword: conversational approach)
 4. Topical focus (keyword: influential topic)
 5. Reflections “towards God” (keywords: Praise to God – human dignity)
1. To see how contemporary challenges are addressed [is to take faith relationships and their content and reflect on the way that issues should be addressed. Keywords: identify + address]
To discern / identify the questions and to find a way to address them. Apologetically; in correlation; accountability.

Let me give an example and then explain it by means of typical questions:

Historical schemes are construed:

Before the Enlightenment / After the Enlightenment

Pre-scientific / scientific and modern / postmodern

If we take – for an example then - the period before Enlightenment / after the Enlightenment:

Before Enlightenment - Three key dimensions constitutes reflection. Group/authority/tradition. But after Enlightenment: subjectivity; rationality; historicity. In each one of these fields we find strong tensions:

Subjectivity: relationship individuality vs collectivity (who I am/ who are we/ how do we live together; democracy; human values; human rights; economic and social rights; tolerance; universalism and particularism; self-realisation; reconciliation and justice; violence; war; liberation; sexism)

Authority vs reason: what can we know; of what can we be sure; models of rationality; epistemological debates; ethical debates on the foundation and content of morality; rhetorical dimensions and understandings / perspectives on language; critical reflection on the “tradition of suspicion” (power/unconscious/interest)

Tradition vs now: Where do we come from; where are we heading; what guides us / what may we hope? What role does re-membling / imagination play in our lives of faith; importance of tradition; debates on development and progression; how serious should we take our biological composition?

2. Reactions to the spirit of the times [is to take faith relationships and content and reflect on the context in which it comes to expression. Keyword: awareness of problems or to reflect a climate in which reflection has to take place]

It is almost like describing Climate / To summarise an awareness of specific problems. Let me mention three combinations: 1. Secularisation and spiritualizing; 2. Post-modernism and fundamentalism; 3. Globalization and the ecological crisis.

Secularisation (good thing? / bad thing?) and spiritualizing (strong return of religiosity??)

Post-modernism (period in which we have the broadening horizons of the unsayable / divided and multiple self / desire --- all meeting in the body) and **fundamentalism** (all kinds of fundamentalism: national/political/religious/cultural; our understanding of tradition as the only legitimate understanding = infallible; THE truth; and those that differ or question our understanding, are evil / heretics. The values of obedience/ blind loyalty / uncritical following of faith convictions)

Globalization (which can be cultural / political / economical; the world becomes smaller; researchers and scholars talk about stretched social relations, intensification of flows; increased interpenetration and global infrastructures. For many this is a positive experience – humanization / improving quality of life) and **ecological** crisis (which we are all aware of: ecological exploitation)

The challenge is not only to discern / also to identify these problems / to read signs of time: secular and spiritual / post-modern and fundamentalistic / globalization and the ecological crisis – to discern, identify and to respond theologically to these identified problems / issues. Are we not perhaps ourselves part of this problem, especially if we lose our sense of self-critical existence?

3. Discursive engagements [is to take faith relationships and content and constructively engage with others. Keyword: conversations]

To engage with others / to not only talk to oneself / to transcend isolation

How?

Theological reflection can only take place in conversation / in dialogue / in constructive differences of opinion.

At least seven conversations:

- a. Not only the theological voices of Amsterdam, München, Oxford... but also of Kinshasa, Lagos, Polokwane – unfortunately not all voices are audible yet
- b. Theological Disciplines with each other (Systematics / Ethics with Old Testament)
- c. With other disciplines / other fields of knowledge (Systematics/ Ethics with Neuro-sciences and Biology; literary science ; Political Science; Art; Psychology and Sociology)
- d. With public life: Public theology (human rights / economic systems)
- e. Dogmatic conversation within the church (on resurrection / confessions of faith – Belhar / being church today)
- f. With other church groupings / denominations (reconciliation / unity)
- g. Developing systematic theological teaching (teaching methods / what should be taught)

4. Reflections that have become very influential by focusing on a specific topic (keyword is almost self-explanatory: influential topic). An example: Especially since the late fifties of the previous century, we have experienced a remarkable Trinitarian Renaissance in theological reflection. Renewed and Exciting and influential reflection on the Trinity. That has brought about in these circles five motifs:

- Trinitarian reflection as the biblical grammar (this is the way to talk about God)
- God as living God, historical, faithful and acting God
- To discern and develop each aspect of the acting trinitarian God
- Pastoral implications of trinitarian reflection
- Formation of practical patterns (eg sacraments)

5. Reflections strongly characterized by its “towards God” [is to take faith relationships and content and reflect on the nature of the relationship itself]

Many years ago the British-American systematic theologian Geoffrey Wainwright in his inaugural address described the task and method of Systematic Theology as the proclamation of the glory of God; as the enjoyment of God. This is a very good description for a long and strong tradition of dogmatic reflection that see its reflection as directed solely towards God, as in service of God, an act of glorifying God – almost in the sense of the NT words that everything has its being in God. That is: Reflection, worship and faith flow together in the praise and glory of God. But then: inseparable – remarkably – with human dignity. Gods praise and human dignity: where Gods praise is proclaimed, being human and human dignity acknowledge / respected and celebrated. In this trend Systematic Theology and Ethics finds its most intimate integration. Finds its closest connectivity with a life characterized by love / obedience.

Kyk ons vervolgens na die Suid-Afrikaanse sistematies-etiese toneel en akademiese tendense, Let wel: ek konsentreer in hierdie uiteensetting op die vernaamste institusionele akademiese instellinge en tendense van daar onder in die Kaap deur die Vrystaat en Natal tot hier bo in Gauteng.

Baie oorsigtelik net die volgende en die aanduiding van ‘n Tipe + Nommer by enkele teoloë is eenvoudig net om as verduideliking te help met wat die betrokke teoloog doen:

By Ikeys met sy Departmentt of Religious Studies (afgetrede John De Cruchy A gegradeerde Tipe 3 / Nommer 1) en die Universiteit van Natal met sy School of Religion (sy seun Steve de Gruchy was hier en het twee jaar gelede tragies verongeluk) vind ons sterk beklemtoning van kreatiewe en kritiese nadenke met metodologiese fokus op interdisiplinariteit in die aanspreek van veral etiese en samelewingsvraagstukke soos menswaardigheid, rekonstruksie van en versoening in ons SA samelewing, geslagsgelykheid en aanspreek van Aids. By die Universiteit van Natal – wat hulle teologiese onderrig volledig anders geherstruktuur het - vind ons ‘n vierbaan tematiese struktuur met ‘n hele aantal Sentra wat hulle Gemeenskapsbetrokkenheid bestuur waarin samelewingsvraagstukke aangespreek word. By die klem op spesifieke samelewingsvraagstukke sluit die Universiteit van die Wes-Kaap en Stellenbosch ook aan alhoewel Universiteit van Wes-Kaap baie sterker op ekologiese vraagstukke fokus (Groot Projek: Die aarde in God se ekonomie – Ernst Conradie. Tipe 4 / Nommer 2) en Maties – onder andere met sy Beyers Naude Sentrum vir Openbare Teologie - benewens menswaardigheid, ook veral die sterk eienskap van Reformatoriese teologie – waaronder konfessionaliteit en ekumeniese teologie – dra (Dirkie Smith Tipe 3. Mengsel van Nommer 5/1, Nico

Koopman Tipe 3 en Nommer 5/3, Robert Vosloo en Nadia Marais). Laasgenoemde, nl Reformatoriese teologie - word waarskynlik veral die sterkste deur Potch se Gereformeerde Teologiese Fakulteit uitdruklik ondersteun en uitgebou (Nico Vorster). Die Vrystaatse Teologiese Fakulteit is 'n ligte mengsel van dit alles, maar dan veral die baie sterk klem op die Trinitariese Renaissance (werk van Rian Venter Tipe 4 en NОmmer 4) wat neerslag vind in 'n sensitiwiteit vir die sosiaal-etiese aard van spreke oor God en 'n verantwoording van die onderliggende epistemologiese dinamika. Veral 'n uitgesproke fokus op epistemologiese transformasie. So is ook die Department van Sistematiese Teologie en Etiek aan Unisa (Rothney Tshaka, Louis Kretschmar 'n ligte mengsel van omtrent alles met waarskynlik ook 'n ietwat sterker klem op Bevrydingsteologiese temas en samelewingsvraagstukke waaronder menswaardigheid. Baie besonders by Unisa is hulle Sentrum vir Spiritualiteit (Christo Lombard / Dirk van der Merwe) asook die Navorsingsintituut vir Religie en Teologie (Cornel du Toit: mengsel van Tipe 4 en 5; mengsel van nommers 1,2 en 3; Wessel Bentley) met wye spektrum van samelewingsvraagstukke wat aangespreek word maar veral ook die huisves van SASRF – die South African Science and Religion Forum.

And the Department of Dogmatics and Christian Ethics at Tuks? We have a rich tradition that was formed by the influential work of – if I can only mention the previous generation – the late proff Johan Heyns, Conrad Wethmar and Etienne de Villiers. De Villiers was also responsible for the establishment of the Centre for Public Theology. Presently the Department consists of 5 academic staff members and one administrative staff member.



But first let us take a look at the vision of the Department:

Is to conduct programmes for teaching, research and community service in the field of doctrinal theology, systematic reflection, Christian ethics and philosophy of religion in an international and

locally relevant manner. This vision is pursued in a multi-church environment which implies that the opportunity exists for different church traditions to be adequately represented, and that these traditions are also encouraged to enter into a creative and scholarly dialogue with one another.

The vision of the Department is translated into five objective:

- Provide relevant theological and religious education
- To nurture transformative leaders
- To perform quality research
- To promote justice, peace, the integrity of creation and a reconciling diversity
- To engage people on the margins of society

The values that find expression in our pursuit of these objectives are:

Critical thinking

Intellectual excellence

Transformational praxis

Inclusivity

What are the respective research interests of our present staff members?

Prof Johan Buitendag - who is also the current Dean of our Faculty - focuses within the broader science-theology dialogue on ecological issues and has developed an eco-hermeneutics in which he especially stresses the importance of habitat for all life to prosper, including human life. (Type 3; Number 1/3)

Dr Willem Fourie investigates the possibility and contours of an ethic of sociality that's useful in post-colonial, pluralist and unequal societies. His focus is the post-colonialities, pluralisms and inequalities of southern Africa. Currently Willem is in Berlin, Germany with a Von Humboldt Scholarship (Type 3 mixed with 4 / Number 1/3).

Dr Vuyani Vellem - who is the Director of the Centre for Public Theology as well as lecturer in our Department – comes from a strong liberation- theological background. In his research, he sharply distinguishes and exposes ongoing injustices in our society and searches for new ways of bringing about social cohesion (Type 2 / Number 4).

Dr Tanya van Wyk focusses on two main interrelated topics. One focus area is the challenges that the church as institute is facing because of its struggle specifically with regard to diversity in terms of race and sexuality. The other focus area is the meaning and implications of heterotopia, a specific understanding of the concept of space where one is not afraid of the Other. Both research topics are investigated from both a postmodern and a post-colonial perspective (Type 4 / Number 1/2).

En my eie navorsing en bydrae?

Kan omskryf word as die her-konseptualisering van religieuse ervaring vanuit evolusionêre perspektiewe binne die teologie-natuurwetenskap dialoog.

Waaroor gaan dit?

Dit is om vanuit ons konkrete bestaan as mense van vlees en bloed wat biologiese op 'n spesifieke wyse aanmekaar geweef is – en daarom moet eenvoudig die implikasies van ons biologiese aanmeekaargeweefdheid ernstig neem – om vanuit hierdie perspektief krities, interdisiplinêr en multi-dissiplinêr te besin oor die betekenis van ons geloofsverhouding met God as Skepper en Verlosser. Te besin hieroor vanuit evolusionêre perspektiewe. Dit is om die beste teologiese insigte en beste natuurwetenskaplike insigte bymekaar uit te bring. Hierdie bymekaar uitbring van die beste insigte maak oneindig nuwe, opwindende en groot perspektiewe, ook geloofsperspektiewe oop. Vanuit die basiese oortuiging: Geen evolusie, geen ervaring, en dus geen godsdiens. Evolusionêre ontwikkelinge het religieuse ervaring moontlik gemaak. Een – daars baie – maar een baie belangrike biologiese resultaat en insig vir menswees, is dat – en ek sê dit maar met beelde – is dat ons koppe en harte sit inmekaar!! Kan nie die twee uitmekaar haal nie. Ons is biologies so aanmekaar geweef! Ek noem hierdie ineen van Harte-koppe, die affektief-kognitiewe dimensie van menswees, van die self. Die Affektiewe wat gelaagd jou gemoed, emosies en gevoelens insluit. Om dit anders te sê: Ons is as mense so bedraad (senuwees) en ge-aar (bloednetwerke)! En die twee netwerke werk altyd saam. In geloofsterme uitgedruk met behulp van die woorde van die Franse teoloog-filosof Blaise Pascal: Ons het God lief met ons harte. Dan voeg ek by: met harte wat lewe pomp! Ons het God lief NIE in die eerste plek met allerlei argumente of denkstrukture nie. Maar ons praat wel oor hierdie geloofsrelasie rasioneel en op verantwoordelike wyse saam met al die ander vakgebiede – soos die natuurwetenskappe - in ons nadenke oor geloofsverhouding met God. En dit strek nog dieper: Die hart het selfs redes waarvan die rede nie eers weet nie. Redes wat oor eeue heen gevorm is in interaksie met ons leefwêreld. Diep opgesluit lê in onself as emosies. As deel van die affektiewe dimensie van ons menswees. Op hierdie wyse – so word in sekere paleo-antropologiese kringe en in sekere neurowetenskaplike diskoerse beweer - is emosies die beliggaming van die logika van oorlewing.

Kort gesê: Ons as mense oorleef “survival of the fittest” - nie omdat ons die sterkste is nie, want ons is nie; nie omdat – ja dis belangrik – nie omdat ons so aanpasbaar is, want ons is – maar omdat ons affektief-kognitief aanmekaar geweef is: ons kan omgee (compassion), meegevoel hê, goedgeunstelik optree (kindness) en daarvoor nadink en insigtelik praat; lief he / hoop koester en vertroetel te midde van intense lewensverlange (sontyds mis ek God), weerloosheid / diep afhanklikheid / seerkry / moedeloosheid en uitsigloosheid ken en hieroor / daarmee 'n tapestrie / mosaiek van betekenis saamweef oor die sin van die lewe.

Dit alles stempel en maak uit: Geloofsnadenke oor ons diep verhouding met God, met ons medemense en in die wêreld as post-dogmatiese denke wat neerslag vind in 'n Post-dogmatiese Dogmatiek / Systeem Teologie. Hoe?

Post-dogmatiese dogmatiek

Gee as begrip uitdrukking aan 'n baie spesifieke hermeneutiese houding en benaderingswyse vanuit die sistematiserende metodologie van die vakgebied wat grondig nadink oor God en God se

selfbekendmaking, Christus en die Heilige Gees, menswees en kerkwees, skrif, verlossing en die dinge wat ons kan hoop. Dit word gekenmerk deur:

- Bereidwilligheid om die lewe self - voor God, in die wêreld en saam met ander mense – gevoelsvol-nadenkend in die oë te kyk;
- om by ervaring (as die bewussynsmatige interaksie met werklikheid) te begin as ons besin oor God as Skepper en Verlosser;
- om eksplisiet te sê van waar ons hieroor praat en dink want daar is ook ander stemme ter sprake, ook ander plekke;
- om die teorie- en affektief-geladenheid van alle ervaring te erken;
- om kontekstueel eerlik te wees oor die dae en nagte van nie-weet;
- om nie as vanselfsprekend te aanvaar dat God aan ons hermeneutiese kant is nie;
- hermeneutiek as oefenskool in nederigheid en verbeelding te sien;
- menswees te beskou vanuit evolusionêre perspektiewe waarin ons ons affektief-kognitiewe dimensie van die self erken en her-konseptualiseer as deel van ‘n linguisties-kulturele proses of gebeurlikheid, ‘n web van gelaagde signifikasie wat ons onophoudelik herinner aan die onpeilbare diepte van alteriteit / Andersheid / Vreemdheid.

Post-dogmatiese dogmatiek: impliseer nie met die woordjie “post” dat daar geen dogmatiese moment of dimensie meer is aan ons nadenke nie. Impliseer nie dat daar ‘n moment sou kom waarin ons dit agter ons sou laat nie. Nee, Ons kan nooit daarsonder nie. Die vraag is net hoe dit hermeneuties geweeg word.

Ons bydrae as Departement saam met die ander Departmente en Skole waarin Sistematiese Teologie en Etiek in Suid-Afrikaanse universitêre instellinge op verskillende wyses gehuisves en aangebied word, ons wil saam ‘n konstruktiewe bydrae lewer tov die aanspreek van eietydse samelewingsvraagstukke, veral oor ekologie (Buitendag); oor sosiale kohesie en transformasie veral tov menswaardigheid (Vellem); oor verskeie etiese kwessies (Aids; stamselnavorsing) en ons ekonomie (Fourie); oor kerkwees in ‘n post-apartheid samelewing (Van Wyk); oor gelowige wees in ‘n leefwêreld waarin die beste teologiese oortuiging en beste natuurwetenskaplike oortuiging saam bedink moet word (My eie navorsing). Daar is egter ook nog veel wat as ernstige uitdaginge aan elkeen van ons gerig word (Ek dink hier veral aan ‘n baie besondere onlangse artikel wat Rian Venter oor Sistematies-teologiese nadenke in SA geskryf het). Hy vrae goeie kritiese vrae wat ek meen ons moet nog ernstig neem:

- Hoe kontekstueel is ons nadenke na alles in Afrika;
- wat is die aard van die kennis wat ons meen om te deel;
- hoeveel daarvan is nog deurspek met ons eie voorkeure en magsbelange;
- hoe welkom is dit wat regtig anders is in ons denke;
- hoe verstaan ons ten diepste die funksie van gosdiens in ons samelewing?
- En laastens die baie belangrike vraag: Hoe praat ons oor God, geloof, geloofsoortuiginge aan ‘n publieke universiteit in SA?

My voorlopige antwoord aan prof Venter: Ons bydraes wat ons reeds maak en die uitdaginge wat ons tot dieper selfkritiese denke moet bring, moet beide op post-dogmatiese wyse onderneem word. En as ek dalk

dit nie mooi duidelik en verstaanbaar uiteengesit het nie, gaan ek op 'n laaste kort wyse afsluitend nog probeer. Ek gaan musiek neem (Taize) en aan die hand hiervan dit nog oulaas probeer verduidelik. Musiek waarin die dogmatiese stelling: Christus is die Here Jesus sentraal staan.

As jy hierna luister en nie so mooi onder woorde kan bring wat presies hierdie musiek met sy dogmatiese stelling "Christus is die Here Jesus" aan jou doen as mens van vlees en bloed, as iemand wat in 'n hart-kop verhouding met God, die wêreld en ander mense staan en wat in hierdie verhoudinge afhanklikheid, weerloosheid, gebrokenheid, seerkry, moedeloosheid, maar ook ekstase, vriendskap, geluk, vrede – noem maar op – ken. As jy dit nie so mooi onder woorde kan bring wat die musiek presies aan jou doen nie maar duidelik weet wat dit vir jou in jou menswees beteken, dan meen ek snap jy waaroor 'n post-dogmatiese Dogmatiek gaan.

