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CHAPTER TWO:

SCIENTIFIC-PHILOSOPHICAL POSITIONING

A story is not just a way of conveying information,
it is a way of interpreting facts.
Ruard Ganzevoort

FROM PREMODERNITY TO POSTMODERNITY TO A NARRATIVE WORLDVIEW

In this chapter I will *position* myself by briefly describing some of the developments in the sciences over the past centuries. The purpose is to better understand our current context and the choices made in this study.

2.1 PREMODERNITY

This brief overview of some of the developments in the sciences over the past centuries will give us *an* understanding of *why* we are today where we are, and of how our understanding developed from a "premodern", to a modern, to a postmodern worldview.

Before the 1500s the dominant world view in Europe, as well as other civilizations, was the notion of an organic, living and spiritual universe. People lived in small cohesive communities and experienced nature in terms of organic relationships, characterized by the interdependence of individual needs and those of the community. The scientific framework of this worldview rested on two authorities - Aristotle and the Church. In the thirteenth century Thomas Aquinas combined Aristotle's comprehensive system of nature with Christian theology and ethics and, in doing so, established the conceptual framework that remained unquestioned throughout the Middle Ages. The nature of medieval science was very different from that of contemporary science. It was based on both reason and faith and its main goal was to understand the meaning and significance of things, rather than prediction and control. Medieval scientists, looking for the purposes underlying various natural phenomena, considered questions relating to God, the human soul, and ethics to be of the highest significance (Capra 1983:37-38). According to Erickson (1998:15) the -

pre-modern understanding of reality was teleological. There was believed
to be a purpose or purposes in the universe, within which humans fit and were to

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be understood. This purpose was worked out within the world. In the Western tradition, this was the belief that an omnipotent, omniscient God had created the entire universe and the human race, and had a plan that he was bringing about. There had to be reasons for things, and these were not limited to efficient or "because of" causes, but also included final or "in order that" causes. This understanding was carried over to the interpretation of history. There was a pattern to history, which was outside it.

2.2 MODERNITY

The medieval outlook changed radically in the sixteenth and seventeenth century when the essential outlines of the Western world view and value system were formulated and replaced by that of the world as a machine. This metaphoric view was the result of the revolutionary changes that took place in physics and astronomy, represented by the works of Copernicus, Galileo, Descartes and Newton (Capra 1983:38).

The Newtonian worldview supports the following suppositions:

- Scientific knowledge is "true" and "absolute" knowledge (Auerswald 1974:328).

- The world consists of structure and phenomena, according to which objects have the status of primary reality. Objects have absolute characteristics that are indicative of their nature (Naudé 1990:29). In order to understand a phenomenon or object, it needs to be reduced to its most basic elements which are simpler, easier to understand, and often measurable. Once these building blocks and their characteristics are known, an understanding of the whole can be reached by recombining the elements (Fourie 1991:1).

- Seen in terms of time and space, the epistemological suppositions are essentially linear. Following that, knowledge is accumulated through a set of parallel linear efforts based on inductive or deductive exploration of linear cause and effect relationships (Auerswald 1974:329).

- The world is structured according to rational, understandable rules or laws. In this way the whole universe was set in motion, and it has continued to run ever since,

like a machine, governed by immutable laws. The mechanistic view of nature is thus closely related to a rigorous determinism, with the giant cosmic machine completely causal and determinate. All that happened had a definite cause and gave rise to a definite effect, and the future of any part of the system could - in principle - be predicted with absolute certainty if its state at any time was known in all details (Capra 1983:52).

- The world of phenomena can, with the help of scientific method, be objectively described without taking into account the role of the human observer. The world "out there" is apart from the world "in here" (Fourie 1991:2; see also De Jongh van Arkel 1991:64-65).

In short, using Lines' (*in* De Jongh van Arkel 1988:224) summary:

> *The classical science worldview was mechanistic in analogy, reductionistic in method, disciplinary in research, deterministic in outlook, static in perception, entropic in direction, dualistic in practice, and positivistic in determination of truth.*

2.3 THE NEW PHYSICS

At the beginning of this century physicists began to realize that it was not possible to apply a Newtonian way of thinking to phenomena that were more complex (example, subatomic phenomena) than those with which the classical physicists had to contend (Zukav 1986:46, 52, 73). This questioning (although their initial idea was rather to confirm than to question) of the Newtonian presuppositions started with Max Planck (quantum theory) in 1900 and was continued by Albert Einstein (theory of relativity) and Heisenberg (uncertainty principle). This resulted in a totally new way of looking at the world. Emphasis was now placed on wholeness, patterns and the connections between parts. This world view is characterized by terms such as *organic, holistic* and *ecological* (Auerswald 1985:4; Fourie 1991:2-3; De Jongh van Arkel 1988:225, 1991:66; Capra 1983:66).

These newer ideas in physics oppose the Newtonian notion of reductionism, linear causality and neutral objectivity. In the world of the "*new physics*" (Capra 1983:66; Zukav 1979:70, 96) the image of the universe as a great machine is replaced by a view of the

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universe as an invisible whole, whose parts are interrelated and can be understood only as patterns of an ongoing process.

While the natural sciences were struggling to come to grips with this view of the universe, the social sciences were eager to establish themselves as scientific disciplines. In this attempt they embraced Newtonian thinking because of the order and rigor it had brought to the natural sciences. The social sciences, in true Newtonian fashion, studied human behaviour by reducing it to what was supposed to be its elements. These elements were seen as interconnected via cause and effect and as uninfluenced by the process and context of the study. Often these elements were hypothetical constructs which were thought to have particular characteristics and which were then treated as if they were semi-concrete entities. This process of reification by such eminent theorists as Bateson (1980) and Sarbin and Coe (1972 *in* Fourie 1991), resulted in the wide acceptance of the existence of entities such as the "ego", "the unconscious", "defence mechanisms", "intelligence" and "hypnotic susceptibility" (Fourie 1991:3).

As more and more fields of scientific enquiry encountered problems of increasing complexity, the inadequacies of a Newtonian way of thinking became increasingly clear. As Gestaltists had long ago realized (e.g. Perls 1969 according to Fourie 1991), often one cannot understand the whole by means of a synthesis of its parts. Criticism of the Newtonian epistemology of science has thus come from the natural sciences (e.g. Capra 1983; Prigogine and Stengers 1984), biology (e.g. Maturana 1975; Varela 1979), anthropology (e.g. Bateson 1972, 1979) and various branches of psychology such as counselling (e.g. Cottone 1988 & Ford 1984 according to Fourie 1991) and family therapy (e.g. Keeney 1979, 1982).

Two developments played a central role in the movement away from the Newtonian thinking. These were the exposition of general systems theory and the emergence of second-order cybernetics (Fourie 1991:3).

2.4 GENERAL SYSTEMS THEORY

The idea of a *General Systems Theory* was first formulated by Ludwig von Bertalanffy, orally in the 1930's and later in numerous publications after the war (Von Bertalanffy 1975:153). In the 1950's, when the focus shifted from elements to organized wholes, the wholes were considered as systems made up of elements and the interrelationships between them. Von Bertalanffy (1950) proposed a general theory which

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could account for the behaviour of all systems, be they mechanical, chemical or human. He himself applied this theory to psychiatry (Von Bertalanffy 1974) and family therapists were quick to follow suit. Some of the general notions of general systems theory are the following :

1) Systems consist of smaller sub-systems and larger supra-systems.

2) Systems, sub-systems and supra-systems are separated from one another by invisible boundaries through which information flows. Here the focus is on open systems.

3) Behaviour inside these systems normally remains within certain boundaries. This balance is known as *homeostasis*.

4) The principle of feedback of information between open systems forms part of this approach.

5) In human systems a particular state of functioning can be achieved in different ways. Similar states of functioning can result from completely different initial states of functioning and different states of functioning can result from similar initial states of functioning. This is the principle of *equifinality* (Fourie 1991:4-5; Naudé 1990:40-41;   De Jongh van Arkel 1988:229).

The *General Systems Theory* is closely connected with the science of *cybernetics*, the development of which began around the middle of this century. This is a theory of interaction between open systems, supra-systems and sub-systems. Two models that are especially important for family therapy and that are constructed according to the principles of cybernetics, are the strategic model of Haley, Watzlawick, etc. and the structural model of Minuchin.

In this approach emphasis during a pastoral conversation is placed on interaction between family members and on the fact that the therapist is a power broker. In the strategic approach, relationships were viewed as either symmetrical (equal) or complementary (with one person in a more powerful position than the other). In the structural approach, power hierarchies between sub-systems, formed the basis of conceptualisation. The description of the problem and the family are seen as objective; the observer is seen as standing completely outside the observed system (Fourie 1991:4-6; Matthysen 1993:2; De Jongh van Arkel 1991:66-67; Hoffman 1990:6-7; Bateson 1980:192-193).

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2.5 SECOND-ORDER CYBERNETICS

From the aforementioned it is clear that cybernetics / general systems theory furnished a way to describe the functioning of systems. These were mostly descriptions of interaction. Implicit in such descriptions was the presence of the *observer* who made the descriptions. This person was considered to be objective, that is, outside of the system being described. However, in the case of living systems it soon became clear that it was impossible for such an observer to be objective. On the one hand, the very act of observation influenced the behaviour of the people under observation. On the other hand, the observation was coloured by the observer's way of observing and his/her epistemology or way of thinking. The observer is, therefore, part of the world that he is observing. Subsequently, any description of the system had to account for the observer as much as for each of the members of the system being observed. This, of course, implies a higher order of observation, i.e. observation of observation. The study of such a higher order of observation was called cybernetics of cybernetics or second-order cybernetics (Hoffman 1985; Keeney 1979:118, 1987:76ff; Dell 1985:9; Fourie 1991:6-7).

Constructivism is an important aspect where realities are constructed. This, however, does not mean that any reality can be constructed, a kind of "anything goes" approach. This is not the case. "Anything goes" is solipsism[1], not constructionism. The reality which is constructed in a system cannot be just anything, it has to fit in with the ideas which the participants have about themselves, about each other, about the problem and about the world in general (Fourie 1991:8-9; see also Keeney 1979:117ff; Auerswald 1987:324; Van Huyssteen 1986:170 and De Jongh van Arkel 1988: 226, 227, 228-229).

In other words, such a co-constructed reality exists in the domain of shared meanings. Maturana (1975:316-317, 1978:47) called this "consensual domains" whereas Bateson (1972:xvii) used the term "ecology of ideas" to refer to the way in which ideas are interlinked in (family) systems. For this reason a second order perspective is called an ecosystemic approach by theorists such as Keeney (1979) and Auerswald (1987). This term combines the focus on systems and on *ecology* and emphasizes the complicated, interlinked and ever-changing networks of ideas and meanings existing within and between systems.

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[1] A philosophical position (referred to also as subjective idealism) holding that the only real world exists within the consciousness of the individual. Everything outside the individual's consciousness is an illusion, since human consciousness can only be aware of what exists within consciousness itself (Deist 1992:240).

These human networks exist in *language*. This means that when humans explain language as a biological phenomenon, they use the properties of the phenomenon to explain the phenomenon (Maturana 1978:50ff), therefore, any observer is an observer in language. Language could possibly be described as akin to the way living structures produce substances to "protect" themselves (Le Roux 1987:52). Semantic values, then, are not properties of the interaction, but features of the description which an observer makes as if it exists irrespective of individual structures.

The diversity of language is an indication of the subtle flexibility, not of language, but of human systems and their ability to create meanings and meanings of meanings and meanings of meanings of meanings in language. Language is the consensual playground of human beings (Le Roux 1987:57). And since all problems are in language, all solutions should, therefore, also be in language.

In the therapeutic situation this means that the pastor can only use distinctions in language that arise from the pastoral conversation. The therapeutic session starts with the language of the family and their view of the problem - expressed in language. By examining the descriptions of the differences (through questioning, listening, playback of feelings, circular questioning), the pastor discovers the language of the system. In this process the pastor is part and parcel of the family system and plays the role of facilitator. During the therapeutic process the pastor can submit a variety of new ideas and distinctions that could probably fit the family members. These proposals are presented in language and can open up new possibilities for the family. In this way the pastor and the family construct a reality together by using language.

From this point of view, *systems* are seen as constructs that are used to order the world; systems are co-depent and relative to the observer (Naudé 1990:42). A system is also a cybernetic network that processes information. The therapeutic situation can be seen as a system. For this system, the cybernetic network refers to the context of complexly intertwined human relationships in which the relevant information processed includes symptomatic and therapeutic communications. This type of system is referred to as an *ecological relationship system* (Keeney 1979:119-120).

Furthermore, each system consists of *organisation* and *structure*. The organisation of a system defines itself as an entity, which must remain the same for the system to

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maintain its identity. If the organisation of the system changes, the system becomes a different entity (Maturana 1975:315-316; 1978:32; Simon 1985:36).

The structure of a system determines the space in which it exists as a composite unity that can be perturbed through the interactions of its components, but the structure does not determine its properties as a unity. Whenever the structure of a unity changes without change in its organisation, the unity remains the same and its identity stays unchanged (Maturana 1975:316). But whenever the structure of an entity changes so that its organisation as a composite unity changes, the identity of the entity changes and it becomes a different composite unity (Maturana 1978:33).

These ideas are based especially on Wiener's principles of cybernetics. His theory implied a new approach to systems, according to which information is fed back to form a closed system of control - this was called feedback.

Another aspect of second order cybernetics is the concept of *structure determinism*. This refers to the organisation of living structures in terms of how, through constant self-referral processes, they maintain themselves and, therefore, it is argued that the changes which they undergo, are determined by their own organisation and structure. The structure of the system determines the domain of structural changes it may undergo without disintegration. Structural change with loss of organisation (that which specifies a system as a unit) is disintegration (Le Roux 1987:36).

The implication this has for pastoral care is that families react to an intervention according to their own belief systems. The structure of a family determines that risk can be defined linguistically in various ways, depending on the context in which they find themselves.

Following on from the aforementioned, regardless of how boundaries are drawn, human systems always exercise their *autonomy* in terms of structure determinism. A live system cannot be alive if it does not form a closed, organised unit. Organised, closed systems are autonomous (Dell 1985:6; Keeney 1987:82-83). Despite the diversity amongst the living, autonomy is the common organisation which living systems implicitly recognise by calling them living (Maturana 1980:73).

As an autonomous structure a human system constantly finds itself embedded in a context (environment, medium). This implies that, in the case of interpersonal

interaction, participants serve as mutual medium for one another. Each participant is, therefore, both subject and object simultaneously (Le Roux 1987:46).

A family, when defined as a cybernetic system, is a social organism, the whole pattern of organisation of which is stabilised through the changing of different parts. The purpose of family therapy is then to change the way in which the problematic social context maintains its organisation through the processes of change.

According to Bateson (1980:76) all adaptive change requires a source of the random. Keeney and Ross (1983:377) call this source of the random "meaningful Rorschach" or "useful noise". Not just any *Rorschach* will do; the client assumes that there is meaning or order to it. His search for meaning will then generate new structure and pattern. Part of a pastoral conversation must always include meaningful *Rorschachs* which clients (and sometimes pastors) believe to contain "answers" and "solutions". These Rorschachs may be constructed from family history, cultural myth, psychobabble, religious metaphor, stories about other clients (fictional or not), and so forth. The explanations clients propose or request usually provide a clue to what form of Rorschach will be useful.

Stability refers to the stabilisation of a cybernetic system's wholeness or autonomy and change refers to the construction of different patterns and structures which serve to maintain the whole system (Keeney & Ross 1983:378).

2.6 POSTMODERNITY

I will only briefly discuss postmodernity since I will describe it in more detail and the implications thereof in the next section concerning a narrative worldview. The latter being especially important for this study.

Moving now to a postmodern worldview, to my way of thinking, this is a different "movement", and not simply a further evolution of Systems Theory. It is a discontinuous paradigm, a different language. In its broadest form this paradigm has been referred to by many labels, of which "postmodernity" is properly the most commonly used label.

According to Anderson (1990:6) there are three major processes shaping this transition to a postmodern worldview:

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1) The breaking down of old ways of belief throughout this century. The result of this breakdown is a kind of unregulated marketplace of realities in which all manner of belief systems are offered for public consumption.

2) The second process is the emergence of a new polarization, a conflict about the nature of social truth itself; epistemology joins the old family favourites – class, race, and nationality – as a source of political controversy. This polarization is evident in battles over education – especially moral instruction – and in several intellectual disciplines.

3) The third process is the birth of a global culture, with a worldview that is truly a *world*view. Globalization provides a new arena (or theatre) in which all belief systems look around and become aware of all other belief systems, and in which people everywhere struggle in unprecedented ways to find out who and what they are.

The reasons for the above mentioned processes are the following :

1) *Intellectual* know-how (and its resultant technology) has failed to deliver the good life and has revealed itself not only as ambiguous but also as potentially lethal in its consequences. What seemed good has turned out to be enormously ambiguous in its fruit.

2) The *political* promise of the Enlightenment has failed to bring peace and has led to powerful tyranny sustained by ideology.

3) "Salvation history has collapsed". Gilkey (cited by Brueggemann 1993:7) observes that with Western culture as the barrier of good in its struggle with evil, "a good case can be made that the spiritual substance of the Enlightenment took its shape *against* the Hebrew and the Christian myths or salvation history. Said another way, the claim of "progress" has not worked out at all convincingly.

4) Confrontation with world religions has shaken the monopolistic claim of Western religions that are closely allied with the Enlightenment and with its forms of domination (Brueggemann 1993:6-7).

In contrast to modernity, of which objective certitude and settled hegemony are common attributes, postmodernity makes mastery and control much more problematic – if indeed master and control can any longer be our intention at all. Brueggemann (1993:8-9) summarize this new intellectual situation as follows:

1) Our knowing is inherently *contextual*.

2) It follows that contexts are quite *local*, and the more one generalizes, the more one loses or fails to notice context.

3) It follows from contextualism and localism that knowledge is inherently *pluralistic*.

Postmodernity brought with it a new way of understanding history, as Erickson (1998:18) says –

In history, there is a new historicism, in which history is not merely the objective discovery of the past, but actually creates it.

Postmodernity can be summarized as follows:

Tenets of postmodernity
1. The objectivity of knowledge is denied. Whether the knower is conditioned by the particularities of his or her situation or theories are used oppressively, knowledge is not a neutral means of discovery.
2. Knowledge is uncertain. Foundationalism, the idea that knowledge can be erected on some sort of bedrock of indubitable first principles, had to be abandoned.
3. All-inclusive systems of explanation are also questioned, whether metaphysical or historical, are impossible, and the attempt to construct them should be abandoned.
4. The inherent goodness of knowledge is also questioned. The belief that by means of discovering the truths of nature it could be controlled and evil and ills overcome has been disproved by the destructive ends to which knowledge had been put (in warfare, for instance).
5. Thus, progress is rejected. The history of the twentieth century should make this clear.
6. The model of the isolated individual knower as the ideal has been replaced by community-based knowledge. Truth is defined by and for the community, and all knowledge occurs within some community.
7. The scientific method as the epitomization of the objective method of inquiry is called into question. Truth is not known simply through reason, but through other channels, such as intuition (Erickson 1998:18-19).

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2.7 A NARRATIVE WORLDVIEW

… narrative and story appear to provide a cure, if not a panacea, to a variety of Enlightenment illnesses (Hauerwass & Jones 1989:1)

The concept of narrative is very similar to postmodernity in that is just as difficult to define and there are numerous opinions about what exactly narrative thinking is all about.

Flowing from the above discussion about postmodernity the following ideas can be associated with a narrative worldview. This description of a narrative worldview will be especially focused on narrative therapy, since my narrative pastoral conversation comes from the principles associated with this movement. Later on I will give a description of narrative theology.

2.7.1   Realities are socially constructed

The metaphor of social constructionism leads us to consider the ways in which every person's social, interpersonal reality has been constructed through interaction with other human beings and human institutions and to focus on the influence of social realities on the meaning of people's lives.

The main premise of social constructionism is that the beliefs, values institutions, customs, labels, laws, definitions of labour, and the like that make up our social realities are constructed by the members of a culture as they interact with one another from generation to generation and day to day. That is, societies construct the "lenses" through which their members interpret the world. The realities that each of us takes for granted are the realities that our societies have surrounded us with since birth. The realities provide the beliefs, practices, words, and experiences from which we make up our lives, or, in postmodern terminology, constitute our selves (Freedman & Combs 1996:16).

According to Hoffman (1990:2-3) *social constructionists* place far more emphasis on social interpretation and the intersubjective influence of language, family and culture, and much less on the operations of the nervous system as it feels its way along (as in the case of constructivism).

Hoffman favours social constructionism because, instead of seeing individuals as

stuck in "biological isolation booths", it -

> *posits an evolving set of meanings that emerge unendingly from the interactions between people. These meanings are not skull-bound and may not exist inside in what we think of as an individual "mind". They are part of a general flow of constantly changing narratives* (1990:3).

According to Griffith and Griffith (1992:6) social constructionism describes -

> *how meaning is negotiated within different domains of social discourse. These meanings, expressed in the metaphors, idioms, and other linguistic forms in which we relate to one another, mould our perception of the world into the consensual realities that we know. Social constructionism analyses our traditions, languages, and institutions to discover how they shape our social discourse, thereby governing the kind of world our language permits us to know.*

We could ask further: What is the origin of these stories or narratives that are constitutive of persons' lives? The stories that persons live by are rarely, if ever, "radically" constructed - it is not a matter of them being made-up, "out of the blue", so to speak. Our culturally available and appropriate stories about personhood and relationships have been historically constructed and negotiated in communities of persons, and within the context of social structures and institutions. Inevitably, there is a canonical dimension to the stories that persons live by.

Thus, these stories are inevitably framed by our dominant cultural knowledges. These knowledges are not about discoveries regarding the "nature" of persons and of relationships, but are constructed knowledges that are specific to a particular strain of personhood and of relationship. For example, in regard to dominant knowledges of personhood, in the West these establish a highly individual and gender-distinct specification for ways of being in the world (White 1992:124-125).

2.7.2 Realities are constructed through language

When experience is regarded as text, conjointly interpreted in community, then language plays a critical role in showing the distinctions that bring our world into being. We use language to give meaning to our experiences. Using the words and grammar

available to us; we interpret our experiences. These are stories, since interpretations can only be made if connections are drawn between things, and this is done within a time-frame. As soon as you do this, namely interpreting experiences and connecting them to time, you create a story. The experiences are raw and meaningless, until we use words and concepts to give meaning to them. Language allows us to reframe the past events into usable experiences. If the language is limited, the story is limited and hence the interpretation is hamstrung and less useful (Müller 1999). I found this especially true in writing this dissertation in English, my second language, along with the fact that I have had to learn French as a third language. Just to learn new vocabulary is not enough. Language should be used to make new interpretations. New connections need to be made and only then is a new liberating language brought into being. In this way people make meaning out of their life events; meaning is not made for us. 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).

Language, then, cannot properly be considered in isolation from culture because language inevitably originates from a cultural milieu, and is typically construed as the feature that most clearly differentiates cultures (Paré 1995:6). White (1992:124) describes how each of us enters a world where particular distinctions embedded in language and culture have been granted truth status:

> *These practices and knowledges have been negotiated over time within contexts of communities of persons and institutions that comprise culture. This social formation of communities and institutions compose relations of forces that, in engaging in various practices of power, determine which ideas, of all those possible, are acceptable - they determine what is to count as legitimate knowledge.*

The critical implication of the link between language and culture, and a conclusion implicit in the quotation above, is that cultures - including influential institutional forces within cultures - propagate values. And so cultures do not create their realities through language in a neutral way; rather, the language distinctions that cultures make are inherently ideological.

Knowledge can be viewed as -

that which is represented in linguistic propositions,

and therefore -

not something that people possess somewhere in their heads, but rather something people do together. Languages are essentially shared activities.

Viewed from this perspective, -
the performative use of language is in human affairs.

This also implies the possibility of giving new meaning by means of new language. Narrative therapy depends on the meaning-giving power of language and stories. Whenever a shared language-construct functions in a conversation, new language can be linked to an event and in this way the experience can be re-interpreted. This shared language-construct, naturally, includes a shared culture and world view. The way that understanding occurs is through language-constructs by which meanings are shared with each other at a selected moment.

Therefore we can refer to the pastoral situation as a language system. This is an "in-language"-event. In the process of this language-event, a vocabulary is constructed which is functional in the situation.

It is extremely important for the pastor to be able to understand and communicate his participant's language, since this language serves as the metaphor through which the participant expresses his experiences. The participant's words, language and meanings interpret the happenings in his/her life. Therefore the pastor's primary task is to be a diligent listener who is slow to come to an understanding. The quicker a pastor "understands", the more the likelihood of true dialogue is diminished, and the potential for misunderstanding is enhanced (Müller 1999).

2.7.3 Narrative and reality

If the realities we inhabit are brought forth in the language we use, they are then kept alive and passed along in the stories that we live and tell. The central role of

narrative in organizing, maintaining, and circulating knowledge of ourselves and our worlds has been stressed by many postmodern writers, for example:

> *. . . whether you get your literature from deconstructionist critics and university-press novelists, or from the latest item in the airport bookstore, or from the daily news, you are likely to get a similar subtext about the human condition : a message that life is a matter of telling ourselves stories about life, and of savoring stories about life told by others, and of living our lives according to such stories, and of creating ever-new and more complex stories about stories – and that this story making is not just about human life, but is, human life* (Anderson 1990:102).

> *. . . we organize our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative – stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing, and so on* (Bruner 1991:4).

> *. . . narrative can provide a particularly rich source of knowledge about the significance people find in their work-a-day lives. Such narratives often reveal more about what can make life worth living than about how it is routinely lived* (Rosaldo 1986:98).

> *In striving to make sense of life, persons face the task of arranging their experiences of events in sequences across time in such a way as to arrive at a coherent account of themselves and the world around them. . . . This account can be referred to as a story or self-narrative. The success of this storying of experience provides persons with a sense of continuity and meaning in their lives, and this is relied upon for the ordering of daily lives and for the interpretation of further experiences* (White & Epston 1990:10).

When therapists listen to people's stories with an ear to "making an assessment" or "taking a history of the illness" or "offering an interpretation," they are approaching people's stories from a modernist, "structuralist" worldview. In terms of understanding an individual person's specific plight or joining them in their worldview, this approach risks missing the whole point. Lynn Hoffman (1991:12-13) makes a similar observation when, referring to Gergen's (1991a) work, she says that traditional therapists believe that there

are "essences" in the human experience that must be captured in some kind of narrative and offered to clients in place of their old, illusory narratives. Going in, the therapist already has some idea of what these "essences" are. Postmodern therapists do not believe in "essences." Knowledge, being socially arrived at, changes and renews itself in each moment of interaction. There are no prior meanings hiding in stories or texts. A therapist with this view will expect a new and hopefully more useful narrative to surface during the conversation, but will see this narrative as spontaneous rather than planned.   The conversation, not the therapist is its author.

Within a social constructionist worldview, it is important to attend to *cultural* and *contextual* stories as well as to individual people's stories. According to Mair (1988:127), -

> *Stories inform life. They hold us together and keep us apart. We inhabit the great stories of our culture. We live through stories. We are lived by the stories of our race and place.*

White (1991) writes that cultural stories determine the shapes of our individual life narratives. People make sense of their lives through stories, both the cultural narratives they are born into and the personal narratives they construct in relation to the cultural narratives.   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. Some cultures have colonized and oppressed others. The narratives of the dominant culture are then imposed on people of marginalized cultures.

Whatever culture we belong to, its narratives have influenced us to ascribe certain meanings to particular life events and to treat others as relatively meaningless. Each remembered event constitutes a story, which together with our other stories constitutes a life narrative, and, experientially speaking, our life narrative is our life.

A key to this therapy is that in any life there are always more events that don't get "storied" than ones that do – even the longest and most complex autobiography leaves out more than it includes. This means that when life narratives carry hurtful meanings or seem to offer only unpleasant choices, they can be changed by highlighting different, previously un-storied events or by taking new meaning from already-storied events, thereby constructing new narratives. Or, when dominant cultures carry stories that are

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oppressive, people can resist their dictates and find support in subcultures that are living different stories.

So, narrative therapy is about the retelling and reliving of stories. As people retell their stories in therapy, they often "notice that they have already experienced participating in an alternative story" (Zimmerman & Dickerson 1994a:235).   Bruner (1986a:17) writes, -

> . . . retellings are what culture is all about. The next telling reactivates prior experience, which is then rediscovered and relived as the story is re-related in a new situation. Stories may have endings, but stories are never over.

But it is not enough to recite a new story. In order to make a difference, new stories must be experienced and lived outside of the four walls of a therapist's office. Bruner (1986a:22-25) goes on to say, -

> . . . we are not dealing with culture as text but rather with culture as the performance of text – and, I would add, with the reperformance and retellings. . . Stories become transformative only in their performance.

2.7.4 Narrative and truth

When we say that there are many possible stories about self (or about other aspects of reality), we do not mean to say that "anything goes." Rather, we are motivated to examine our constructions and stories - how they have come to be and what their effects are on ourselves and others. Spence (cited in Vitz 1992a:14) claims that this construction that describes and summarizes the client's past has narrative form. The mind, in which memories are found, is actively interacting with and changing the understanding of its own past.
As Jerome Bruner (1990: 27) has written, -

> Asking the pragmatist's questions - how does this view affect my view of the world or my commitments to it? - surely does not lead to "anything goes." It may lead to an unpackaging of presuppositions, the better to explore one's commitments.

Richard Rorty (1991b: 132) puts it this way:

The repudiation of the traditional logocentric image of the human being as Knower does not seem to us to entail that we face an abyss, but merely that we face a range of choices.

These authors seem to be saying that a postmodern worldview makes it *more* necessary to examine our constructions and to decide carefully how to act on them, not less. The issues of deciding, of choosing, and of examining the effects of our choices are central to the kind of therapy that we practice. Not only do we carefully examine the beliefs and values that we choose, but we invite the people who come to see us to examine their beliefs and values as well.

To this end, we make beliefs and values grist for the therapeutic mill. We try to understand the beliefs that support people's problems. We inquire about where those beliefs come from and what processes of social construction have recruited people into those beliefs. We try to be "transparent" (White 1991) about our own values, explaining enough about our situation and our life experience that people can understand us as people rather than as "experts" or conduits of professional knowledge.

Even if we wanted to foster a value-neutral, "anything goes" reality, we couldn't. One cannot make up and inhabit a completely new social reality overnight. It took several generations for the beliefs, practices, and institutions of our fledgling society to take on the weight of reality. Instead of implying "anything goes", the expressions "everything is contingent" is maybe closer to reality. It is not as if there are no rules, but that the rules that do exist are decidedly "historically and culturally situated" (Gergen 1985:273), rather than understanding that essential truths are metaphysically located, and as such are eminently prone to potentially endless revisions.

While, as Berger and Luckmann (1966: 86) write, "in any developed society there are many subuniverses of meaning," these subuniverses are not infinite in number. The reifying and legitimizing influences of our cultural institutions constrain us very effectively, leading us to see certain possibilities as desirable and completely blinding us to other possibilities. As Joan Laird (1989: 430) puts it, -

> *. . . sociocultural narratives . . . construct the contextual realms of possibility from which individuals and families can select the ingredients and forms for their own narratives.*

But some people have readier access to a wider range of sociocultural narratives than others, and some narratives are dominant while others are marginalized. Laird (1989: 431) reminds us of this when she goes on to write of -

> *. . . the politics of story making or mythmaking. Clearly there are both obvious and subtle differences in the power individuals and particular interest groups possess to ensure that particular narratives will prevail in family, group, and national life. Not all stories are equal.*

Social realities may not be "essentially true," but that doesn't stop them from having real effects.

Furthermore, accepting a narrative approach as normative for arriving at human meaning doesn't signal an end to controversy or apologetics, and so on – far from it. Today's intellectual world is dominated by narrative and hermeneutic theory that is secular and atheistic. Indeed resent theory (e.g. the Deconstructionists) is so thoroughly nihilistic as to strongly imply that the modern secular understanding of narrative has exhausted and destroyed itself and come to an end. This should be seen as an opportunity for the revival of a more traditional understanding of narrative – an understanding more typical of premodern thought, more involved in the oral and less in the written narrative (Vitz 1992b:26).

Regardless, to take a narrative model as a new paradigm in the social sciences makes the Christian position more plausible, at least in the sense that the Christian understanding is then no longer qualitatively different from the type of model accepted as normative by others. Whether non-believers will come to accept the Christian story as better is, of course, another issue. In the same line of thought, Carson (1996) holds that although confessional Christianity cannot wholly embrace either modernity or postmodernity, it must learn certain lessons from both. He decries the hubris that attributes perfect knowledge to humans, and affirms the need to recognize that all human knowledge is in some way culturally bound and that all interpreters have a cultural location. Yet Carson would be first to concede and insist that these premises ultimately

have scriptural legitimation. Human beliefs are indeed shaped in part by language, culture, and community. That is not all there is to be said, however. Carson has observed that in the realm of knowing, we join the experts of deconstructionism and of the new hermeneutic in insisting on human finiteness. What is more, we go further and insist on human sinfulness. The noetic effect of sin is so severe that we culpably distort the data brought to us by our senses to make it fit into self-serving grids (Carson 1996, chapter 3).

Le Roux (1996:17) argues that relativism is not concerned here, because a playful interaction with the text does not lead to fixed truths which are recognizable for everybody. What actually happens is that we look at the text in a different way each time and we can play with different possibilities of meaning. This is not a form of relativism, but rather real understanding. We only really come to understanding of the text when the playful interaction with the text leads to new and other possibilities. To play with the text is not the undermining of the truth of the text. In the playful struggle with the text new meaning grows. It is simply different. It is not a truth that is accessible and acceptable for everybody. It is a truth that is not empirical clinical and which can be abstracted and described to everybody's satisfaction. This truth is a truth-for-me. Even persons who believe in external truths that transcend human knowledge have difficulty denying that the way individuals shape perceptions of these objective truths is significantly affected by the uniqueness of their experience with the environment and cultural context in which this experience takes place. Thus, there is rather the recognition of multiple perspectives, assuming instead plurality of understandings for any aspect of social reality. Postmodern thought suggests a subject that is "socially and linguistically decentred and fragmented (Cheek 2000:18-19).

The idea is not to describe a portrait of marriage, for example, but to go about with an open mind and searching spirit together with my co-researchers with their stories and The Story. The pastoral therapist has the responsibility to facilitate the maintenance of further development as well as the deconstruction of the participant's life story. The conversation takes place within her/his tradition on the one hand, and facilitates the growth and creative development of particular life stories on the other hand. The fact that we quote Scripture during a premarital pastoral conversation does not make it pastoral. When Scripture is used, it should be in terms of contextual interpretation, i.e., an interpretation reached through conversation to which all participants subscribe to. The search for *truth* as a member of a certain community/society is to seek to *be true* to the

primary narrative that structures the community's way of being in the world.   This approach acknowledges both cultural unity and cultural plurality.   While recognizing the power of language and culture to shape individual lives, it nevertheless invites intercultural dialogue and the opening up of traditional ways of ordering life to new experiences (Gerkin 1997:110).

In a narrative metaphor, people are seen as organizing their experience in the form of stories (Bruner 1990).   Clearly, any one story cannot capture the range of people's experience;   therefore, there are always experiences that lie outside of, or do not fit or make sense of any given story.   Stories become a context in which certain information or experiences fit but not others.   In a narrative metaphor, the therapist looks for experiences that are not currently being storied, which do not fit into the dominant (problem) narrative.   Questions can be asked that invite clients (*sic*) to develop an alternative story around these experiences.   It is not the specific experiences but, rather, its potential meaningfulness to the alternative story that is important (Zimmerman & Dickerson 1994b:234-235;   see also Parry 1991:39).

2.7.5 The politics of power

One of the attractive things to me about Michael White's writings has been the way in which he addresses the politics of power.   He (1991, 1993, 1995; White & Epston 1990) argues for a "constitutionalist perspective," which proposes that while we as human beings can know no essential truths, the experiential truths of our daily lives are constituted by the stories we live.   He (White 1993:125) writes:

> *The constitutionalist perspective that I am arguing for refutes foundationalist assumptions of objectivity, essentialism, and representationalism. It proposes . . . that essentialist notions are paradoxical in that they provide descriptions that are specifying of life; that these notions obscure the operations of power.   And the constitutionalist perspective proposes that the descriptions that we have of life are not representations or reflections of life as lived, but are directly constitutive of life; that these descriptions . . . have real effects in the shaping of life.*

In order to understand White's handling of differences in power, it is necessary to understand a little about the work of Michel Foucault (1965, 1975, 1977, 1980, and 1985).

Foucault was a French intellectual who studied, among other things, the various ways in which people in Western society have been categorized as "normal" and "abnormal." He examines madness (Foucault 1965), illness (1975), criminality (1977), and sexuality (1985) as concepts around which certain people have been labelled as insane, sick, criminal, or perverted, and describes various ways in which they have been separated, sequestered, and oppressed on the basis of that labelling.

To Foucault, language is an instrument of power, and people have power in a society in direct proportion to their ability to participate in the various discourses that shape that society. The people whose voices dominated the discussion about what constituted madness, for example, could separate the people *they* saw as mad from "polite society," sequestering them in mental institutions where their voices were cut off from polite discourse. He argues that there is an inseparable link between knowledge and power: the discourses of a society determine what knowledge is held to be true, right, or proper in that society, so those who control the discourse control knowledge. At the same time, the dominant knowledge of a given milieu determines who will be able to occupy its powerful positions. To Foucault, power is knowledge and knowledge is power (Freedman & Combs 1996:38). In putting power and knowledge together in this way, Foucault rejects a formulation of power and knowledge that would suggest knowledge only becomes problematic when it is wielded by those in power to suit their own ends. Instead, he argues that, mostly, we are all acting coherently within and through a given field of power/ knowledge, and that, although these actions have very real effects, they cannot be identified with specific motives. Here Foucault is not talking about all forms of power, but about a particularly modern and insidious form of power.

Foucault thus dissuades us from a concern with an "internal point of view" for the explanation of the operation of power, challenging any preoccupations we might have with who controls its effects and how it is exercised. Since we are all caught up in a web of power/knowledge, it is not possible to act apart from this domain, and we are simultaneously undergoing the effects of power and the exercising of this power in relation to others. However, this does not, by any means, suggest that all persons are equal in the exercise of power, nor that some do not suffer its subjugating effects very much more than others.

> *Let us not, therefore, ask why certain people want to dominate, what they seek, of what their overall strategy is. Let us ask, instead, how things work at the level of ongoing subjugation, at the level of those continuous and*

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> *uninterrupted processes which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviours, etc. In other words . . . we should try to discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts, etc. We should try to grasp subjection in its material instance as a constitution of subjects* (Foucault 1980:97).

Foucault's conception of the inseparability of power/knowledge is reflected in his confrontation with those who argue for the ascendancy of particular knowledges over others. He would ask: What alternative knowledges would they disqualify and which persons or groups of persons are likely to be diminished through the success of such arguments for ascendancy?

Foucault maintains that it is the isolation of specific knowledges from the discontinuous knowledges that circulate around them that invests their discourses with the effect of power. This isolation is essentially achieved by the development of "objective reality" discourses that qualify these knowledges for a place in the hierarchy of scientific knowledges. Foucault traced the history of these knowledges that were accorded this status, investigating their effects, their limitations and their dangers (White & Epston 1990:22-23; Cheek 2000:22-24).

Foucault's conception of the inseparability of power and knowledge is reflected in his confrontation with those who argue for the ascendancy of a particular brand of knowledge over others (Foucault *in* Madigan 1992:269). For example, the discourse of pharmaceutical medicine, propped up and supported by a powerful industrial lobby, often overshadows the talk of lesser known, yet sometimes safer and more effective alternatives of naturopathic medicines.

Foucault suggests that alternative knowledges are often silenced through their disqualification. Foucault calls these *local knowledges* in contrast to those cultural knowledges which survive and rise above others: the latter he calls *global knowledges*[2].

The "privileging" of specific cultural practices over others also acts to disqualify whole groups of people, who through their actions are viewed by the culture as different.

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[2] In his descriptions of "global totalitarian" knowledge practices Foucault suggests two types of subjugated knowledges : *erudite knowledges* are those which have been excluded from written history, *local knowledges* are those that, although currently surviving in particular cultural discourse, are denied the space to be adequately performed (Foucault *in* Madigan 1992:269, *and in* White and Epston 1990:25-27).

These groups, who for instance practise a different sexual preference, fashion, diet or spiritual orientation, are quite often marginalized. Arguments for the ascendancy of one idea or practice over another promote the rhetorical position that actual "truths" exist. Foucault (1980:93) writes:

> There can be no possible exercise of power without certain economical discourses of truth which operate through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth.

Foucault differs from traditional perceptions of power which regard it as negative. He claims that power does not come from above, but rather, from below (the subject) where cultural knowledge claims are internalized and produced in every social interaction. It is therefore not exercised negatively from the outside, although negation and repression may be some of the effects. Once an individual becomes part of society's discourse, certain cultural "truths" are then integrated and privileged, thereby restraining the construction of alternatives. To participate in these "truths", certain less dominant, less scientific, or perhaps lesser accepted "truths" are subjugated (Madigan 1992:270; White 1991:137).

I would like to clarify that when Foucault is describing "truths", he is not subscribing to the belief that there exist objective or intrinsic facts about the nature of persons, but is refering instead to constructed ideas that are given a "truth" status. These "truths" act to set standards of "normalization" and influence how people are to shape or constitute their lives. It would appear that the primary subjugating effect of power through "truth" and "truth" through power is the specification of a form of individuality, and this in turn is a vehicle for power (White & Epston 1990:19-20; Madigan 1992:270).

A knowledge practice viewed as "truth" within cultural discourse sets standards for the behaviour of the individual, around which the individual shapes his or her life (Foucault 1984a). For example, certain specified body weights for women have shaped societies' perception of good and bad body shapes; many Western women exercise, diet, and even fast, as part of an obsession with getting their bodies to match certain privileged body specifications.

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Foucault suggests that the cultural construction of power is not repressive but rather acts in such a way as to subjugate other alternative knowledges. He proposes that persons become "docile bodies" and are conscripted into performances of meaning which lend support to the proliferation of both "global" knowledges as well as techniques of power (Foucault 1980). Foucault parallels a postmodern anthropological position, as he does not propose that there are global knowledges that can be universally accepted as truth. Thus, dominant narratives tend to blind us to the possibilities that other narratives might offer us (White & Epston 1990:20; Madigan 1992:270).

Foucault (1980) specifies that knowledges which make global truth claims are supported through knowledges of modern scientific disciplines. He writes that as both participants and subjects of this power through knowledge, we are -

> *Judged, condemned, classified, determined in our undertaking, destined to a certain mode of living or dying, as a function of the true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power* (1980:94).

White (1991:14) argues that people come to therapy either when dominant narratives are keeping them from living out their preferred narratives or when -

> *. . . the person is actively participating in the performance of stories that she finds unhelpful, unsatisfying, and dead-ended, and that these stories do not sufficiently encapsulate the person's lived experience or are very significantly contradicted by important aspects of the person's lived experience.*

Foucault was especially interested in how the "truth claims" carried in the "grand abstractions" of modernist science constituted a discourse that dehumanized and objectified many people. He was interested in finding and circulating marginalized discourses that might undermine the power of modern scientific discourse. He (1980: 80-84) wrote of the "amazing efficacy of discontinuous, particular, and local criticism" in bringing about a "return of knowledge" or "an insurrection of subjugated knowledges." "We are concerned …," he said, -

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with the insurrection of knowledges that are opposed …to the effects of the centralising powers which are linked to the institution and functioning of an organized scientific discourse within a society such as ours.

Michael White argues that even in the most marginalized and disempowered of lives there is always "lived experience" that lies outside the domain of the dominant stories that have marginalized and disempowered those lives. He and David Epston, along with others, have developed ways of thinking and working that are based on bringing forth the "discontinuous, particular, and local" stories of individuals and groups and providing meaning to those stories so that they can be part of an effective "insurrection of subjugated knowledges," an insurrection that lets people inhabit and lay claim to the many possibilities for their lives that lie beyond the pale of the dominant narratives (Freedman & Combs 1996:38-40).

This analysis of power is difficult for many persons to entertain, for it suggests that many of the aspects of our individual modes of behaviour that we assume to be an expression of our free will, or that we assume to be transgressive, are not what they might at first appear. In fact, this analysis would suggest that many of our modes of behaviour reflect our collaboration within the control or policing of our own lives, as well as the lives of others; our collusion within the specification of lives according to the dominant knowledges of our culture (White 1991:139).

We see this for example when diagnosticians who use criteria such as those in DSM-IV behave as if they possessed, instead of research tools, a set of descriptions for real, homogeneous, mental disorders that hold true for all people across all contexts. Or when genetics and pharmacologists, as well as clinicians that rely on their studies, behave as if they are in possession of "the truth" about the causes and cures for DSM-IV disorders. Or when people within the managed care movement seem to believe that it is possible to develop standardized methods that will produce predictable, effective results with all psychiatric "illnesses" in a specified number of sessions within specified intervals. Foucault (1982) calls this the turning of human beings into objectified subjects through *scientific classification*. He also shows how, at different stages of history, certain scientific universals regarding human social life were privileged; through this privileged status certain scientific classifications have acted to specify social norms (Foucault 1984). Hence, socially produced specifications and categorizations of normal and abnormal behaviour evolved which were perpetuated and which Foucault calls *totalization*

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techniques (culturally produced notions about the specifications of personhood) (Foucault 1982).

With further reference to Foucault, Madigan (1992:267-268) mentions another commonly used practice of classification, i.e. the documentation of lives which become available through the invention of files. The file enables individuals to be "captured" and fixed in time through writing, and its use facilitates the gathering of statistics and the fixing of norms. The file can be used as an instrument to promote the construction of unitary and global knowledges about people. This turning of real lives into writing is viewed by Foucault as yet another mechanism of social control.

The professional disciplines have been successful in the development of language practices and techniques which imply that it is these disciplines that have access to the "truth" of the world. These techniques encourage persons in the belief that the members of these disciplines have access to an objective and unbiased account of reality, and of human nature.

What this means is that certain speakers, those with training in certain special techniques - supposedly to do with the powers of the mind to make contact with reality - are privileged to speak with authority beyond the range of their personal experience (Parker & Shotter 1990:7).

According to Madigan (1992:266), Foucault called this a mode of objectification of the subject by means of a *dividing practice*. These dividing practices are social and usually spatial : social, in that people of a particular social group who exhibit differences can be subjected to certain means of objectification; and spatial, by being physically separated from the social group for exhibiting differences. The actions of dividing practices are tolerated and justified through the mediation of science (or pseudoscience) and the power the social group gives to scientific claims. In this process of social objectification and categorization, human beings are given both a social and a personal identity.

These language practices introduce ways of speaking and of writing that are considered to be rational, neutral and respectable, emphasizing notions of the authoritative account and the impersonal expert view. These practices disembody the perspective and the opinions of the speaker and the writer. The presentation of the knowledges of the speaker and writer is devoid of information that might give the

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respondent or the reader information concerning the conditions of the production of the expert view.

When we treat people with this kind of "objectivity", regarding them as objects, we invite them into a relationship in which they are the passive, powerless recipients of our knowledge and expertise. Addressing this, Kenneth Gergen writes, -

> *. . . the post modern argument is not against various schools of therapy, only against their posture of authoritative truth* (1992:57).

Postmodernists believe that there are limits to the ability of human beings to measure and describe the universe in any precise, absolute, and universally applicable way. They differ from modernists in that exceptions interest them more than rules. They choose to look at specific, contextualized details more often than grand generalizations, difference rather than similarities. While modernist thinkers tend to be concerned with facts and rules, postmodernists are concerned with meaning. In their search for an examination of meaning, postmodernists find metaphors from the human sciences more useful than the modernist metaphors of nineteenth-century physical sciences (Freedman & Combs 1996:21).

2.7.5.1 Deconstruction of practices of power

In therapy, the objectification of these familiar and taken-for-granted practices of power contributes very significantly to their deconstruction. This is achieved by engaging persons in externalizing conversations about these practices. As these practices of power are unmasked, it becomes possible for persons to confront them, and to counter the influence of these practices on their lives and relationships.

These externalizing conversations are initiated by encouraging persons to provide an account of the effects of these practices in their lives. In these conversations, special emphasis is given to what these practices have dictated to them about their relationship with themselves, and about their relationships with others.

It is through these externalizing conversations that persons are able to:

- appreciate the degree to which these practices are constituting of their own lives as well as the lives of others,

- identify those practices of self and of their relationships that might be judged as impoverishing to their lives, as well as to the lives of others,
- acknowledge the extent to which they have been recruited into the policing of their own lives and, as well, the nature of their participation in the policing of the lives of others, and to
- explore the nature of local, relational politics.

It is through these externalizing conversations that persons no longer experience these practices as representative of authentic ways of being with themselves and with others. They no longer experience being at one with these practices, and begin to sense a certain alienation in relation to them.   Persons are then in a position to develop alternative and preferred practices of self and of relationship – encounter-practices.   In therapy, one then challenges various practices of power, including those that relate to -

> *the technologies of the self – the subjugation of self through the discipline of bodies, souls, thoughts, and conduct according to specified ways of being (including the various operations that are shaping of bodies according to the gender specific knowledges), the technologies of power - the subjugation of others through techniques such as isolation and surveillance, and through perpetual evaluation and comparison* (White 1991:140-141).

2.7.5.2 Deconstruction of knowledge practices

Pastors can contribute to the deconstruction of expert knowledge by considering themselves to be "co-authors" of alternative and preferred knowledges and practices, and through a concerted effort to establish a context in which persons who seek therapy are privileged as the primary authors of these knowledges and practices.   Some of the therapeutic practices that are informed by this perspective follow.   These by no means exhaust the possibilities.

First, pastors can undermine the idea that they have privileged access to the truth by consistently encouraging persons to assist them in the quest for understanding.   This can be achieved by giving persons notice of the extent to which the therapist's participation in therapy is dependent upon feedback from persons about their experience of the therapy.   It is acknowledged that the person's experiences of therapy are essential

to the guidance of the therapy, as this is the only way in which pastors can know what sort of therapeutic interaction is helpful and what is not.

Secondly, this can be further emphasized if pastors engage persons in some inquiry as to why certain ideas that emerge during the interview are of more interest than others. What is it that persons find significant or helpful about the particular perspectives, realizations, conclusions, etc?   What preferred outcomes, for persons' lives, might accompany the particular perspectives, realizations, conclusions, etc?

Thirdly, pastors can challenge the idea that they have an expert view by continually encouraging persons to evaluate the real effects of the therapy on their lives and relationships, and to determine for themselves to what extent these effects are preferred effects and to what extent they are not. The feedback that arises from this evaluation assists pastors to face squarely the moral and ethical implications of their practices.

Finally, pastors can call into question the idea that they possess an objective and unbiased account of reality, and undermine the possibility that persons will be subject to the imposition of ideas, by encouraging them to provide feedback to her/him about the interview. In response to this, the pastor is able to deconstruct and thus embody her/his responses (including questions, comments, thoughts, and opinions) by situating these in the context of his/her personal experiences, imagination, and intentional states. This can be described as a condition of "transparency" in the therapeutic system, and it contributes to a context in which persons are more able to decide, for themselves, how they might take these pastors' responses (see White 1991:144).

2.8 CONCLUSION

After describing my research orientation in CHAPTER ONE, I gave in THIS CHAPTER an overview of the scientific-philosophical positioning of this study. This involved in giving an account of the development from a premodern worldview to a postmodern worldview. The narrative worldview, which forms part of postmodernity, was describe in more detail, since it will be the position from which this study will be conducted. The following chapter will examine the theological response to this new worldview.