

Response to D C Badenhorst

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I must admit that I am not at all sure why I am standing here responding to this paper by Professor Badenhorst. I am a medic by training, a dilettante in philosophy, a pseudo-theologian (Bib Studs III, UNISA, NDP) and an educationist completely by default. I have not read any of the authors quoted in the Bibliography, although I do recognise the names of Herman Dooyeweerd and Dian Joubert, who is a life-long and dearly cherished friend - Joubert, that is, not Dooyeweerd! But, in order to preserve our friendship, Dian and I have an equally long-standing agreement not to read anything the other writes.

I therefore find myself very much in the position of Casaubon, the main character in Umberto Eco's Foucault's Pendulum, when his girl-friend Liz tells him:

You live on the surface ... You sometimes seem profound, but it's only because you piece a lot of surfaces together to create the impression of depth, solidity. That solidity would collapse if you tried to stand it up.

In my experience, respondents to papers more often than not reveal more of their own presuppositions and misunderstandings than anything about the paper they are responding to. I will simply try to raise some hermeneutical and methodological issues for discussion. These issues may in fact be quite peripheral to the argument of the paper, as I will try to focus on issues that seem to me also to be playing a role in the wider debate in South Africa at the moment.

1. The relationship between values and ethnicity

In the paper ethnic seems to be used in two ways, namely as identical with racial, or, on the other hand to refer to different cultural groupings within the same race as, for example, between English and Afrikaans speaking South Africans. According to Collins' English Dictionary, both of these uses of the term 'ethnic' are correct. However, when terms such as ethnic values and inter-ethnic pressures play an important part in the argument, then it is necessary to define very precisely what is meant by 'ethnic' and 'ethnicity'.

I personally would find it very difficult to talk about 'ethnic values' in either of the two senses of the word, because it seems to me to suggest that there is some inherent link between a certain set of genes (those that determine the so-called racial phenotype) and a set of values, or between a specific form of cultural organization and a specific set of value orientations. This point is very important, because at present Dr Treurnicht is using just such an identification in his use of

events in Eastern Europe and the USSR in defence of his party's policy of geographical and political segregation.

Professor Badenhorst pleads for less emphasis on ethnic values and for more public discussion on formal and informal values. While I support the plea for more public discussion, I believe that the concept of ethnic values should be actively debunked. I agree, though, that an understanding of ethnicity is of great importance in our struggle to establish a non-racial democracy in South Africa. If the events in Eastern Europe teach us anything, it is certainly that ethnicity is a factor that has to be reckoned with in any form of socio-political planning.

2. The usefulness and validity of identifying 'cultural archetypes'

Such 'cultural archetypes' are the 'traditional Afrikaner' and the 'contemporary Afrikaner'; or the 'traditional black community' and the 'contemporary black community'. Although sociology is not one of the many surfaces that I have managed to paste together, I am very unsure about the usefulness of such models.

I may of course be completely wrong, but I find it very difficult to relate to statements such as 'the traditional Afrikaner values originated from the Calvinistic tradition' or 'the traditional Afrikaner was a person who emphasized principles.' The point, though, is that these archetypal pictures of the traditional and the contemporary Afrikaner or black communities, have very powerful influences on the thought and action of groups in the community at the present time.

I would guess that any community at any given time would include a whole spectrum of value orientations, and that it is highly unlikely that the dominant orientation can be deduced, for example, from a community's 'Calvinistic heritage'. So, for example, the traditional Afrikaner's supposed individualism was probably as much a reaction to her geographical isolation on the farms, as to a belief that she was 'individually called by God'. If we want to create the possibility of dialogue, is there not a need to demythologise these archetypal images that we have of ourselves and of others in our community, and is that not one of the tasks of education in a multi-cultured country, to help our children to understand their own and others' mythologies for what they are?

3. The use of the term 'Christian'

As such the adjective 'Christian' denotes one or other value system, point of view or ideology. It seems to me that the term 'Christian' is mostly used as if it has a single and definitive meaning. The fact that everyone from the AWB through the APK, the CP, DRC, IFP, NP, (?DP), SACC, ANC, PAC, all the way to somewhere in the middle of the far left, all claim to be based on 'Christian convictions', should alert us that this term too needs careful explication. I personally would deny the epithet 'Christian' to most of what is being said and done under its banner in this country within the various political groupings.

In trying to understand what it means to be a Christian School in times such as this, we at SHC are exploring David Bosch's concept of Christian mission as the Church-crossing-frontiers-in-the-form-of-a-servant. In this situation we are, as Bosch puts it, stripped of any self-assurance, self-confidence or megalomania. We believe that if Christians working in education are to have any meaningful impact in creating the future, we need to discover this dimension of Christian mission in our professional work, which is, in essence, the dimension of the Cross.

4. The meaning of 'multi-cultural education'

Some authors use it to refer to a unicultural situation in which pupils 'learn about other cultures'. More often multi-cultural education indicates education in a situation in which more than one culture is represented. The aim of multi-cultural education is then to bring children to the point where they not only learn something about each other's cultures, but (with a bit of luck) learn to respect each other's way of doing, saying and seeing and in so doing overcome prejudice and stereotyping.

Although this is a major advance over the first mentioned view, it represents essentially a static view of culture. At our school we understand multi-cultural education to mean empowering children to live (albeit temporarily) in each other's cultures, returning to their own culture enriched and therefore changed. Culture, we believe, is something essentially dynamic and ever changing. If culture is understood in this dynamic manner, then the own culture (and its constituent values) can therefore not be threatened, it can only be enriched, by contact with other cultures.

5. Education and the inculcation of values

According to my Collins 'inculcate' means:

... instil by forceful or insistent repetition; from Latin *incolcare*: to tread upon, to ram down ...

This understanding of education will probably be acceptable to my traditional Afrikaner ancestral spirits, but as soon as you talk about education as 'inculcating values', the question arises 'whose values?' And then you are into the power game of value imposition, of struggle and conflict and, of course, of *apartheid* education. Dr Treurnicht is in my opinion absolutely correct: if education is 'inculcation of values', then you have to have *apartheid* education, otherwise you will have fights.

I am not arguing for 'value free education'. But if education helps children to understand values, to think about them and their role in establishing relationships and communities and in making life meaningful, but also in forming prejudice and stereotyping, if they learnt to understand where values come from, how they are sometimes formed from the contingent experience of societies, but how some values can transcend group boundaries and sectional loyalties and can bind people from divergent backgrounds together, then you are in a totally different educational ball game. Professor Badenhorst referred to this as value articulation.

Professor Badenhorst is quite right that the official value orientation of the educational bureaucracy cannot guarantee any understanding of values by the pupils. The teacher is a crucial figure, but 'if the curriculum is overloaded with so much content that the teacher has to speed through the work without having the time to listen to his pupil's problems - the message is clear: memorizing facts is valuable - human understanding and critical thinking are not.' I am sure most Afrikaner children go through our positivist based, so-called Christian National Education system from sub A to Matric without being able to spot a value even if you painted it red - or even, for that matter, if you painted it orange, white and blue.

When we talk about multi-cultural education as an educational situation in which different cultures (read 'races') are present, we are talking very much from a white point of view. The reality is that 99% of children in the new South Africa are going to undergo their schooling in 'mono-cultural' situations - going to undergo their schooling in 'mono-cultural' situations - i e, in completely black schools. With the declining birth rate of whites and the rapidly emptying white schools in urban and rural South Africa, we whites will soon be a negligible factor in the educational equation, and this whole storm about open schools and models A, B, and C will be seen to be simply a storm in a fish pond.

But, these black children have to be empowered to live in the cultural world of offices and administration, of business and technology. What students strive for in educational institutions are basically cultural competencies to gain access to the echelons of power in our society. These competencies include language ability, computational ability, problem solving ability, and an understanding of how society and the world works. These are competencies which enable access to tertiary education and consequently the possibility of claiming a place in the economic, political and professional life of society.

It is the accurate perception of most black South Africans for instance that the most important cultural acquisition for empowerment will be English language usage together with familiarity with its accompanying cultural milieu. This is and will remain essential for higher education and therefore cultural access to the types of empowerment in our society. In order to be empowered in our society the average black child has to have access to 'white' cultural experiences in a certain sense. For a real future in this country it is essential that this type of access is made possible as widely and as rapidly as possible.

This does not mean acculturation as a white. The experience of truly open schools has shown that children become 'bi-cultural'. They come from their own cultural experience in the home, community and township, which they retain while acquiring and transforming the culture of the open school. The same, of course is true of the white child in the open school, if the school is truly integrated, but to a lesser extent than for the black child because the white child already has access to a form of cultural empowerment. In subliminal ways children understand this 'bi-culturalism' for what it is, as long as the school does not make conscious attempts to assimilate the child to the prevailing dominant culture in the school. Pam Christie's research into open schools has shown that when a previously 'white school' reaches a

proportion of approximately 25% or more black children, then these black pupils start stamping their own influence on the common culture within the school. Children should be allowed to enculturate each other mutually in this way, to become essentially multi-cultural people.

Opening all white schools is one way of doing this, but even if we made available all the empty places in our 'white' school system, it would only touch a fraction of black children clamouring for this type of empowerment. We therefore have to develop educational approaches that will accomplish this type of empowerment even in uniraical schools.

6. Professor Badenhorst's paper announces the end of Biblical Studies

This statement changes the parameters of the debate from: 'What should the Biblical Studies curriculum look like?' to: 'Should Biblical Studies be in the school curriculum at all?' The reason he gives for this, is the need for limiting the number of subjects at secondary school level. I would like to put this statement in a slightly broader perspective.

The problem being faced by educational planners is that of equality of educational provision to all within the limited resources of the country. As I understand the thinking, the only possible approach will have to focus on the government provision of compulsory and equal provision of primary education - the exact level depending on the resources available. The question therefore is, what role can Biblical Studies play at this level?

Secondary education may still receive limited government funding, but there will have to be competition for the limited number of places. This will have serious curricular implications.

The first implication is that of limiting of subject choices, which is the reason for the serious warning by Professor Badenhorst about the future of Biblical Studies as a high school subject. The universities in our country as well as overseas have already started feeling the effects of rationalization. Universities are, for example, loosing Art and Music departments, and in the United Kingdom some universities have even had their Philosophy departments closed! It might seem a much easier exercise at school level, but our experience at Sacred Heart has been that the provision of Art and Speech and Drama as subjects, has made a dramatic difference to the quality of their schooling experience to a large number of pupils. This in turn improves the whole tone of the community life of the school.

A second emphasis will undoubtedly be a stronger vocational emphasis both in the provision of subjects as well as in the content of the traditional subjects. This must inevitably mean an uncoupling of the school curriculum from that of the university. Especially in the sciences and in mathematics, the universities have over the past few decades through their influence on the Joint Matriculation Board, been pushing content down into the school curriculum which should not be taught at that level. This has made of the schools simply sorting mechanisms for universities. At Sacred

Heart we have now decided to introduce into Standard 8 a course in Information Systems, in which students will be learning about office management, basic use of computers for typing and information management purposes, and will spend at least two weeks actually working in an office as part of their school work.

This I believe is the context in which Biblical Studies will have to fight for its existence. And I believe it should fight, for it is clear to me that the churches are not equipping children with the biblical knowledge which forms the basis of the biblical values which (at least nominally) underpin all cultures in our country. There are of course numerous other factors which have to be taken into consideration in developing an exciting and relevant course which would justify its inclusion in a school curriculum, but these have been under consideration at this conference.

I would like to end with a quotation by David Bosch (1980):

Where Christianity loses its ability to recreate the world, other powers will take its place - science and technology, but also atheistic revolution. The old docetism which denied Christ's existence in the flesh, has its modern analogy in the tendency to place the Church and believer outside the turbulent events of the world; the consequences are equally disastrous.

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