

# **Unraveling the Collision of Rigid Religious Mindsets: Towards ‘Cross-Religious Tabernacling’ within a Praxis of Interpathetic Transspection in Pastoral Caregiving – a Hermeneutical Approach**

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## **Abstract**

*Within the context of global pluralism and cultural diversity, religions can and should play a decisive role in creating safe spaces for meaningful encounters and interreligious dialogue in pastoral and interpathetic caregiving. In this regard, a hermeneutic of networking understanding should be rendered critical for promoting meaningful interreligious dialoguing because enmity, prejudice and suspicion, fed by rigid doctrinal stances and autocratic forms of rather imperialistic God-images, contribute in most cases to schismatic estrangement, as well as static, paralyzing thinking (stringent mindsets). In order to contribute to constructive forms of crossing over to the religious other, it is argued that David Augsburgers’s notion of interpathetic care (1986) should supplement the traditional understanding of the cure/care of human souls (cura animarum). To foster a culture of mutual exchange of paradigmatic convictions, a diagnostic chart is developed. The argument is that a comprehensive framework of conceptional and cognitive networking (patterns of thinking) opens up new vistas, i.e., on seeing the ‘bigger picture’. It is further argued that a theological and religious understanding of ‘tabernacling’ could help to create concrete, communal spaces for significant interreligious encounters and interfaith cooperation.*

**Keywords:** Apathy; Cross-religious tabernacling; Diagnostic chart; Interpathetic caregiving; Schemata of interpretation; Transspection; Presencing as mode of compassionate being-there

## **Introduction**

Dialogue in interreligious encounters is indeed complex, and for many believers a threatening experience. As Azumah (2010:269) remarks: “Dialogue is perceived by many as an attempt to undermine faith in order to preserve interfaith harmony and to promote peaceful co-existence at the expense of honest engagement and discussion.” On the other hand, religion and faith play a pivotal role in spiritual healing and general human well-being.<sup>1</sup> An example could be:

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<sup>1</sup> “Theologians, scientists and thought leaders have attempted for centuries to understand the impact that religion can have on human beings; both mentally and physically. And it is commonly accepted around that world that

*“Words that are often associated with religious beliefs include connectedness, hope, optimism, trust and purpose. All of which have been shown to boost mental health. Compassion, forgiveness and gratefulness are also qualities that are strongly associated with individuals who are spiritual and religious” (Forbes 2019).*

Without any doubt, religious involvement has benefits for health and human well-being.<sup>2</sup> It can provide social support, a sense of meaning, and purpose and direction for one’s life (Exline 2002:182). The role and impact of faith-based organisations and religious institutions is becoming paramount in times of severe crises and amongst countries exposed to famine and poverty. This fact has been underpinned by COVID-19 (Boro et al. 2021:133). For example, in Indonesia religious and faith-based organisations launched a COVID-19 command centre to support treatment in hospitals, to disseminate guidelines for religious activities backed by science, and to provide water, sanitation and hygiene packages, food and financial support to the most vulnerable and neglected (hygiene and economic care) (Boro et al 2021:133). Therefore, religion is not merely about a private coping mechanism for believers who are not really willing to face the challenges of life. Authentic religiosity wrestles indeed with questions regarding the ultimate and purposefulness in life, even the quality of health and human well-being.

However, due to skewed forms of conceptualisation and unhealthy forms of prejudice and suspicion, rigid forms of conceptualisation can also cause ‘fractured relationships’ (Exline 2002:182). In interfaith discussions, the latter is a recurring problem because of the unique particularity within each religious tradition, in other words, that which sets one religion apart from another (Baatsen 2017:33), leading to religious exclusivism and extremist particularisms (see inter alia Knitter 1985). As Van Rensburg (2017:1) points out, religions have to work rather towards a common ground of co-dialoguing while coming together not to create a new singular religion in opposition to the other but to form a cooperating, dialogical community of communities and comparative modes of fruitful interreligious exchange. The formation of a cooperating dialogical community of communities is possible. However, according to Van Rensburg (2017:1): “This will never be possible if different groups are suspicious of the unknown ‘other’” (Van Rensburg 2017:1).

### **Stumbling blocks in interfaith communication and interreligious dialogue**

A quite general stumbling block in interfaith communication can be related to the notion of ‘intergroup threat’<sup>3</sup> (Van Rensburg 2017:1). Van Rensburg points out that intergroup threat occurs when one group experiences the feeling or reality that the other will cause

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religion and spirituality are among the most important of cultural factors – giving structure and meaning to behaviors, value systems and experiences” (Forbes 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Jacqueline Service (2021:45) even argues that the ontological foundation for the dynamics of human well-being is based on a sense of divine presence and an understanding that the trinity has been formulated to employ a relational ontology of human well-being; a triune kenosis (self-giving).

<sup>3</sup> Intergroup threat theory can be described as follows (Van Rensburg 2021: “We live in a pluralistic world with different religions, races and ideologies, each forming their own social groups with their own group identities. These groups also have certain criteria for being part of this group. This means that some are included whilst others are excluded. Those included share in benefits only available to those who belong to the in-group. Benefits would normally be acceptance and social support with rules, norms, values, et cetera. We want to belong to these groups, and we fear the destruction thereof.”

them harm. The foreign other is perceived as a threat to 'holy' or 'sanctified' convictions<sup>4</sup>. The latter is closely linked to the exclusivist paradigm (D'Costa 1986:18); i.e., the conviction that due to a very specific fixed doctrinal stance, 'my religion' is the only and 'true religion'. Within interreligious discussions and meetings, the threat of paradigmatic conflict is in most circumstances about a kind of conceptualised threat as linked to patterns of religious thinking and shaped by traditional schemata of interpretation (belief systems) which should be defended in order to prevent doctrinal convictions from different kinds of religious heresy.

According to Azumah (2010: 269), the following main stumbling blocks can be identified:

*Theological issues and the general notion that truth claims are the main stumbling blocks to dialogue; the relationship between mission or propagation and dialogue; the challenge of inherited traditions in relation to the negative and hostile depictions of the Other; the burden of the past and the need to be honest with ourselves and partners in dialogue; and facing the challenge of re-examining our presuppositions about the Other in light of existential realities.*

### **Basic assumptions and research questions**

The phenomenon of religious prejudice, fueled by social and cultural stigmatisations, can have a huge impact on the notion of passionate caring. Therefore, the core problem to be addressed in interreligious dialogues in order to establish trust and authenticity is this: How does one overcome the hampering factor of masked religious convictions, destructive suspicion and prejudice, fixed mindsets, intoxicating schemata of interpretation and rigid dogmatic presuppositions in interreligious communication and intersubjective dialoguing within the parameters of pastoral caregiving?

Taking the stumbling blocks' paradigmatic fixation into consideration, the following research questions surface:

- How does one 'cross over' in pastoral conversations and meetings on interreligious cooperation in order to deal with different mindsets without ending up in schismatic estrangements?
- It is indeed a fact that when sacred things are at stake, conflicts become exacerbated and are becoming increasingly intensified to the extent that interfaith connections become biased. Thus we have the intriguing question: Is it possible to probe into the hidden scripts of religious exclusivity and conflicting extreme polarities in order to contribute to the formation of new conceptualised webs of understanding, and spaces for authentic modes of religious encounters?

### **Basic presupposition and assumptions**

- My basic presupposition is that cognitive analyses without a deep sense of pathos run the risk of unfruitful discussions and positivistic quarrels that

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<sup>4</sup> Volf (2011:5) gives attention to the obstruction of 'sacred obsessions' in the meeting of the foreign other as embedded in the history of past conflicts. When sacred things are at stake, conflicts become exacerbated and are becoming increasingly intensified to the extent that interfaith connections become biased.

contribute to further religious estrangement. Pathos creates spaces for difference but at the same time, empathetic and sympathetic attitudes that convey messages of hospitable belongingness and spiritual togetherness.

- Furthermore, to promote a hermeneutics of mutual understanding, the design of a diagnostic chart for the identification of different schemata of interpretation and patterns of thinking can contribute to a more fair and trustworthy mutuality of sharing wherein the exchange of foreign paradigmatic religious convictions becomes feasible. By creating an atmosphere of mutual tolerance and rational objectivity, it becomes easier to address possible skewed perceptions. In order to achieve this goal, one has to supplement basic cognitive skills like critical introspection with the social skills of interspection (mutual exchange of personal convictions) and with the transcending skill of transspection (entering the mindset of the other) as directed by the pathos of interpathy (Augsburger 1986).
- In meaningful interreligious dialoguing, probing networking schemata of interpretation is not enough. Interpathetic dialoguing should be supplemented by a *praxis mode of presencing*<sup>5</sup>. The term ‘presencing’ (Kempen 2015:140) refers to a specific kind of encounter wherein past, present and future intersect in such a way that sensing (experience) and present moment (state of being) coincide in order to create a sense of meaningfulness and purposefulness.<sup>6</sup> The point in using ‘presencing’, rather than merely referring to the vague notion of ‘a divine presence’, is that authenticity in interreligious encounters should be demonstrated by a praxis that portrays God’s being-there within concrete spaces of communal sharing and caring, hence the reference to the notion of tabernacling.

The first challenge in interfaith dialoguing is accepting the factuality of possible conflicting opposition, especially when the religious other is rendered as foreign and different. When religious differences are embedded in culture and framed by traditional or tribal schemata of interpretation, interreligious dialogue and encounter are exposed to different levels of collision and setbacks stemming from undergirding worldviews, customs, and belief systems.

### **The collision of culturally embedded mindsets en belief systems**

Schemata of interpretation<sup>7</sup> are culturally embedded and shaped by a very particular mindset that correlates with customs, moral issues, belief systems and habitus. I concur

<sup>5</sup> In religious terminology, presencing refers to a praxis of presenting God’s compassionate being-with his people. In Old Testament thinking, presencing refers to the notion of fellowship with God – *coram Deo*. This kind of awareness forms the backbone of experiences of *koinonia*, namely that worship and celebration in communal thinking are representations of divine sacrificial acts of forgiveness, reconciliation, and mediatory love (replacement). In Hebrew thinking, presencing is also spatial (the religious event of tabernacling).

<sup>6</sup> ‘Presencing is a blended word combining sensing (feeling the future possibility) and presence (the state of being in the present moment) (Kempen 2015:140). ‘The boundaries between three types of presence collapse: the presence of the past (current field), the presence of the future (the emerging field of the future), and the presence of one’s authentic Self. When this co-presence, or merging of the three types of presence, begins to resonate, we experience a profound shift, a change of the place from which we operate’. (Kempen 2015:140–141)

<sup>7</sup> “Schemata are cognitive structures representing generic knowledge, i.e., structures which do not contain information about particular entities, instances or events, but rather about their general form. Readers use

with Emmott and Alexander (2014:4) that probing into schemata is essential for establishing the coherence of a text and the exchange of knowledgeable information.<sup>8</sup> Schemata represent patterns of thinking, habitual intentionality and fundamental attitudes towards life. They are steered by specific mindsets reflecting different philosophies of life.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Fundamental differences: The Arab and Western mindset***

In an article in *The Jerusalem Post* on the difference between Arab and Western mindsets, Brown (2015) points out that Westerns tend to interpret life in terms of factuality and reasoned analysis, while Arabs respond in terms of wishes, preference paradigms detracted from an emotional bias. Referring to research done by Margaret Nydell, professor of Arabic at Georgetown University (In Brown 2015:1), the following difference should be borne in mind when one encounters the foreign other:

*While objectivity is given considerable emphasis in Western culture, the opposite is true in Arab culture...Westerners are taught that objectivity, the examination of facts in a logical way without the intrusion of emotional bias is the mature and constructive approach to human affairs...Arabs believe differently.*

Nydell concurs:

*Arabs consciously reserve the right to look at the world in a subjective way, particularly if a more objective assessment of a situation would bring to mind a too-painful truth" (In Brown 2015:1).*

The sociologist Yilmazçoban (2020:189) argues that to avoid discriminatory, competitive, and egalitarian styles, the most important thing is to ensure that the East and the West meet in 'common human values'. Taking into account the 'individualist' characteristics of Western society and the 'familial' characteristics of Eastern Islamic Society, differences should be viewed as supplementary, not as exclusivist. For example, Eastern societies should learn the importance of the person, while Western societies should start to reckon with group thinking as exemplified in family relationships (Yilmazçoban 2020:193).

The main factor that underlies western civilisation, with its culture, ideas, all of its internal and external structure, is certainly a mindset, a conception of humanity and liberty. Western thinking is closely linked to the notion of 'individualised democracy and personal rights.' Batu (2008:1) warns against the threat of unbridled Westernisation: "It is a fact that the West has become a global civilization; it is on its way to eliminating

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schemata to make sense of events and descriptions by providing default background information for comprehension" (Emmott and Alexander 2014:1).

<sup>8</sup> "Linguists, psychologists and narrative scholars employ schema theory to account for the interpretation of a text where the discourse itself does not provide all the information necessary for the discourse to be processed" (Emmott and Alexander 2014:3)

<sup>9</sup> "For Westerners to believe that people of different cultures and histories analyze phenomena in the same way that they do smacks of both ethnocentrism and naiveté" (Brown 2015:1–2).

many remnants and various institutions and ideas of the old cultures. Hence, western cultures are replacing eastern cultures. Eastern nations are gradually being westernized.”

Dealing with different religious mindsets is quite complex. It is difficult to detect culturally and religiously embedded mindsets because the identification of differences can easily lead to generalisations, one-sided categorisation and skewed or even stigmatised perceptions, hence the importance of probing schemata of interpretation<sup>10</sup> in order to avoid schismatic prejudice and relational distrust. It is therefore imperative that processes of authentic intersubjectivity and in-depth encounters should probe into the conceptualised ideas of rational thinking, wording and speechmaking<sup>11</sup> without disturbing established relationships. Eventually, fruitful dialoguing should provide a scopic vision, helping interlocutors to see the bigger picture. That is what Emmanuel Levinas refers to as divine meeting spaces that address and speak to the heart of the other (*La parole de Dieu dans le visage*) (Levinas 1991).

Furthermore, fruitful discussions and authentic dialoguing in cross-religious encounters should be steered by some basic directives in developing an epistemology and hermeneutic of scopic envisioning. These directives can be applied in the design of a diagnostic chart (see figure 1) that can help participants involved in interreligious encounters to start ‘seeing’ the different components that shape the networking dynamics of meaning in intersubjective communication.

### **Directives for fruitful discussion and promoting a scopic vision in passionate caregiving**

The following directives for clear, non-dubious, authentic speech (*parole parlante*) (Merleau-Ponty in Busch and Gallagher 1992:44), fruitful discussion and the establishment of a broader, scopic vision (multiple-perspectivism – on seeing the bigger picture) can be identified:

- Discussions in religious encounters should be about reasonable and thoughtful information and views. Facts and data should make sense and be illuminating – *the quest for logos* (critical, rational thinking – realm of *nous*).
- It should incorporate a moral basis for responsible dialoguing, guaranteeing trust, respect, justice, and dignity. Speech should be credible, true, honest and reveal integrity – *the quest for ethos* (a *habitus* of trustworthiness).
- It should be positively inclined and steered by a willingness, a deep desire, motivation, and intention to reach out and to listen to the other – *the quest for prothumos* (*pro* [before] *thumos* [passion]).
- It should represent and demonstrate a true spirit of hospitable care and compassionate being-with the other – the quest for *pathos* (*sapientia* – zealous

<sup>10</sup> As schemata represent the knowledge base of individuals and frame the networking patterns of thinking, they are often culturally, religiously, and temporally specific. They are ordinarily discussed as collective stores of knowledge shared by prototypical members of a given or assumed community.

<sup>11</sup> The virtue and value of integrity is paramount because it determines the undergirding factors that help to shape significant vocalisation and verbal articulation. Values determine processes of speechmaking and wording (*parole parlante* – creating meaningful language for the logic and clarity of speech (authentic conceptualising) before it becomes molded and articulated in language and audible wording (*parole parlée* – the spoken word) (Merleau-Ponty in Busch and Gallagher 1992:44). The goal in authentic dialoguing is to establish a sustainable ethos of co-responsibility and loyalty to the other (Bozermenyi-Nagy in Van Rhijn and Meulink Korf 1997:304–369).

spirit of unconditional love and wise attitude for the making of informed decisions, revealing integrity, trustworthiness and honesty).

- Authentic dialoguing should be aligned by centrifugal forces of pathos (compassion) in processes of crossing over.

Within the discipline of pastoral care and counselling (*cura animarum* – cure and care of human souls), passion (*pathos* = to be concerned, sensitive and engaged) can be viewed as the coherent and decisive constituent to establish trustworthy encounters (see Louw 2016). It functions as a kind of centrifugal force that moves from the level of artificiality to the level of authenticity. Passion in caregiving refers to a kind of ‘embodied speech’ (the language of human intentionality) that displays true comfort.

*Pathos*, as a many layered concept, is compiled by the following passionate expressions in crossing over to the otherness of the foreign other and the penetrating of different mindsets:

- *Empathy* – a feeling-with *as if* the emotion of the other is becoming mine as well; an affective mode without becoming a replica or copy of the other’s condition (constructive differentiation).
- *Sympathy* – feeling with the other’s predicament. The experience of the other resonates with my own so that on an affective level, they correspond and are more or less the same (constructive cross-identification).
- *Compassion* – a disposition of pity, mercy, grace, comfort, and being-with the other, i.e., to position oneself in the other’s shoes and to reason from the other’s perspective and thinking (contextual engagement; exchange of perspectives).

The reason why *pathos* plays such an important role in cross-religious encounters is that a passionate and compassionate disposition is to my mind a basic prerequisite for the establishment of safe spaces wherein imaginative envisioning can take place, thus establishing new bonds of befriending. Furthermore, many of the major religions and spiritual worldviews refer to compassion as a kind of common denominator that contributes to a sense of co-humanity and mutual belongingness.

In an article on *Compassion in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain Traditions*, Jayarim (2019) points out that the idea of compassion is an important aspect of Buddhist ethics and monastic discipline.<sup>12</sup> Buddhism identifies compassionate devotion as one of the highest virtues which one has to cultivate on the path to Nirvana.

In the Islamic tradition, the principle of love for one’s brother as one loves oneself (*an yuhibba li-akhi-hi*) emphasises that the pathos of compassionate and graceful love is fundamental to authentic faith and religiosity. Therefore, the Qur’an makes the clear statement: “He made friendship between your hearts so that ye became as brothers by His grace” (Qur’an, 3:102–103 in Sunni and Shiite scholars:2018).

In Sanskrit, the equivalent of compassion is *karuṇā* (compassion is a fundamental quality in the bodhisattva ideal of Mahayana Buddhism) (Jayarim 2019). The concept of *karuṇā* is used in both Hinduism and Buddhism. “Therefore, it is natural to extend compassionate action or Karuna to everyone without distinction because we are all one.

<sup>12</sup> “The so-called *bodhisattva path* is about selflessness, wisdom, and compassion” (Trinlae 2017:93).

*As we help others and aid them in their healing process, all beings benefit*" (Karuna Reiki® 2021).

Even in the Jewish tradition and Old Testament thinking regarding atonement, the notion of compassion plays a pivotal role in the display of God's healing grace. "As the signifier of a divine quality which can apply also to human relationships, the root *rh̄m* has much in common with the noun *h̄sēd*, which denotes the fundamental orientation of God towards his people that grounds his/her compassion action. As 'loving-kindness' which is 'active, social and enduring', *hesed* is Israel's assurance of God's unfailing benevolence" (Davies 2001:243). *Hesed* (grace) and *rāham* (mercy, pity) found a basic ethos of care. At the same time, they are primarily qualities of God's righteousness. Even those who serve God as his/her righteous people are called to display love and mercy to those around them. "They who fear the Lord are themselves 'gracious (*hannūn*), compassionate (*rahūm*) and righteous'" (Davies 2001:246).

The main reason to view *pathos* and a disposition of compassion as pivotal is that many attempts to establish sustainable and fruitful interreligious encounters are very soon, after deliberations, conferences and discussions, crippled by a kind of disinterest. When back in their particular, local constituents, participators tend to adapt soon to their previous comfort zones. The passive mode of apathy and sloth set in.

### **Apathy and religious sloth: The intoxicating factors in all forms of pathetic engagements**

As already pointed out in the problem identification, the phenomenon of *religious prejudice*, fuelled by social and cultural stigmatisations, can have a huge impact on the notion of passionate caring. There is a lurking danger: the apathetic mode of a neutralising "blasé attitude" (Bauman and Donskis 2013:42). The danger here is that human beings are treated as functionaries – insubstantial entities. "They appear to the blasé person in an evenly flat and grey tone; no one object deserves preference over another" (George Simmel in Bauman and Donskis 2013:42). An intoxicated apathy and religious indifferentism set in. Even a form of religious smugness veils true commitment.

One can say that apathy and religious indifferentism infiltrate the very nexus of human encounters and the mutuality of interconnecting companionship. Apathy and religious indifferentism can be called the 'killers' of humane encounters, infiltrating the mutuality between the human "I" and the dignity of the other. They intoxicate the ethical categories of loyalty, integrity and existential justice that gives meaning to 'being' (Levinas 1994:351–356).

Apathy resonates with what is called sloth. The Latin word is *accidia*. "Accidia was spiritual torpor – an aversion to religious exercises, which, on account of it, were discharged perhaps with mechanical regularity, but without zeal or joy" (Stalker 1901: 116–117). Sloth leads to irregularity and carelessness (Stalker 1901:126). Due to apathy, sloth represents a kind of 'life fatigue' (O'Neal 1988:15) which eventually leads to *compassion fatigue*, i.e., compassion fatigue as byproduct of spiritual exhaustion, performance anxiety and emotional burnout.

In light of the paralysing and intoxicating factor of apathy, the first incentive in cross-religious encounters should be to overcome this neutralising factor of apathy by establishing an ethos of true concern supplemented by an acute moral awareness of co-responsibility. Such a moral awareness should be accompanied by sustainable acts of



compassionate engagements (*misericordia*). Such an ethos consists of a moral perspective (trustworthiness, integrity, love), a habitus of flexibility (patience and acceptance) and acts of hospitable outreach (merciful *diakonia*).

- (a) *The moral perspective*. An *ethical basis* should be established to safeguard trustworthy encounters. In this regard, the ethical principle of *neighbouring love* forms the cornerstone for overcoming xenophobic prejudice and the passive stance of apathy. It establishes a general ethos of care and concern, focussing on the predicaments of the foreign other.
- (b) *The attitude of flexibility and patience* (adaptation and unconditional acceptance). For the bridging of stigmatised prejudice, the cognitive and analytical skill of thinking from the other's point of view contributes to rational flexibility.<sup>13</sup>
- (c) *Ongoing acts of caregiving and diaconical outreach*. In this regard, the cohesive and common factor in a diagnostic approach and trustworthy forms of humane religious encounters is comforting expressions shaped by *misericordia*<sup>14</sup> (heart of mercy and pity framed by wisdom).

In light of the previous outline on apathy as an intoxicating factor and the fundamental role of pathos in interreligious dialoguing, the further argument will be that in probing the schematised mindset and religious thinking of the foreign other, the notions of interpathy and interspection can play a pivotal role in events of meaningful crossing over. The basic presupposition in interpathetic communication is that interlocutors in interreligious encounters should become interpathetic persons (developing a habitus of interspection).

### **The bridging impact of interspection in interreligious encounters: On becoming an interpathetic person**

For David Augsburger (1986:13), 'interpathy' is a core characteristic of bridging cultural differences and transcending spaces that exceed the limitations of cultural and religious prejudice. Although his definition of interpathy focuses more on intercultural counselling, I want to link the notion of interfaith encounters and the quest for interreligious dialogue to his basic conceptualisation of interpathy as exhibited in the habitus of the interpathetic person. What is most needed for a healthy interspection in interpathetic modes of counselling is disconnection from one's own identity, i.e., the pain of disidentification. Disidentification of the self from old cultural and religious identifications creates the freedom to move forward and back, crossing over and coming back with increasing freedom (*intercultural and interfaith zigzagging*).

On becoming an intercultural and interreligious person, one needs the capacity of epistemological acceleration of processes of spiritual knowing that exceeds the limitations of exclusive thinking. In a world of accelerated change, interculturality and inter-religiosity therefore start with the person of the caregiver. The implication is that the counsellor as person is embedded in a cultural and religious awareness that resides in understanding the relativity of one's own cultural and religious position.

<sup>13</sup> Augsburger (1986) refers to this cognitive life skill as the substitutionary event of *trans-spection in interpathy*.

<sup>14</sup> Mercy and pity displayed in compassionate support and reaching out as a display of love.

The following brief statements outline the basic theory of interpathy in pastoral counselling.

- *Interpathy: The search for internal coherence.*  
*The intercultural counsellor develops a special skill that we call 'interpathy'. Interpathy enables one to enter into a second culture cognitively and affectively, to perceive and conceptualise the internal coherence that links the elements of the culture (with its strengths and weaknesses) as equally as valid as one's own. This interpathetic respect, understanding, and appreciation makes possible the transcendence, for a moment in a particular case, of cultural limitations (Augsburger 1986:14).*

As said, this description is applicable to the fostering of fruitful inter-religious dialoguing, interaction, and communication.

- *Interpathy: Advocating for the other on behalf of the other despite the realism of possible social disconnection and cultural differentiation.*

Interpathy discloses the unhealthy predicament of inclusive disconnections, namely unhealthy stigmatisations and unfair, unrealistic prejudice; it unmasks unfounded demonisations of the other.

- *Interpathy: The legitimate 'third space' – the in-between space of moving around.*

One needs to know that moving around creates a third space and context between one's own cultural/religious position and the cultural/religious position of the other. This third space and context functions as an in-between between the other two. This third-cultural perspective and space enables the figure of a cross-cultural person to make communication easier and to safeguard the dialogue and encounter from artificiality (the danger of pretending to be there but in fact, becoming emotionally withdrawn in a neutral space of indifferentism and sheer apathy).

- *Interpathy: The networking interconnectivity in the migrating global culture of interdependency.*

An interpathetic stance is built on the insight that we do not live anymore in a world defined by nationalisms. Industrialisation, the communications and digital revolution, the exploding population and migrating movement in globalisation, as well as the resultant economic interdependency of a market-driven economy, create a sense of interdependency among all cultures, people and belief systems, and this has brought people around the globe to the point where we are indispensable to one another across all boundaries (the inclusive world of collaborating people). "Ethnic, cultural, religious, and racial backgrounds can become heritages to be prized, protected, nourished, and cherished, as guides for life-style, but not as boundaries, barriers, or blocks to communication and cooperation between people" (Augsburger 1986:19). People are moving and migrating around the globe and are becoming interconnected in our age of co-dependent networking.

- *Interpathy and the scopic vision of transpection*

Instead of introspection (probing into one's own framework of words and intrinsic affections) and interspection (the mutual exchange of different views and perspectives), interpathy is based on transspeciation. It is about an effort to put oneself into the head and mind (not merely shoes) of another person. "Transspeciation is a trans-epistemological process which tries to experience a foreign belief, a foreign assumption, a foreign perspective, feelings in a foreign context, as if these have become one's own. It is an understanding of practice" (Maruyama and others in Augsburgers 1986:30).

- *Interpathy and the connection to empathy and sympathy*

Interpathy presupposes empathy and sympathy.<sup>15</sup> One can say that cross-cultural counselling and cross-religious encounters are built on the following trigon: empathy, sympathy and interpathy. Together they transform antipathy, sloth, and indifferentism into active listening, intensified inter-dialoguing, the exchange of enriching encounters, and the crossing of complexed cultural and paradigmatic crossroads. The trigon transfers the deadlock of discriminating perceptions and dehumanising stigmatisation into the deliberate willingness of transspeciation; they contribute to a hospitable space of coming home.

To put the theory of transspeciation into praxis, the following diagnostic tool has been developed to illuminate the basic constituents for displaying a scopic vision. It portrays the dynamic networking by means of a graphic design. The chart helps to scrutinise the different undergirding conceptualised components. It also functions as a hermeneutical and analytical tool that can guide participants in cross-religious encounters; it also helps interlocutors not to become captives of a tunnel vision and intoxicating schemata of skewed interpretations.

### **Diagnostic Chart<sup>16</sup> for the Development of a Scopic Vision in Cross-religious Encounters: Assessing schemata of interpretation**

The real challenge in developing a scopic vision is making an appropriate, diagnostic assessment of all the undergirding issues (scripts) playing a role in discussions. The following *analytical* and *dialectic skills* should be applied during all forms of deliberation:

- *Retrospection* – to probe into past experiences and to analyse previous documents and scripts in order to assess strengths and weaknesses, success and failure, even to mourn for mistakes if necessary (realm of remorse and reflection on what restitutorial justice entails).

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<sup>15</sup> Augsburgers (1986:27) points out that empathy is the choice to transpose oneself in another's experience in self-consciousness awareness of the other's consciousness. There are indeed similarities but with the distinct maintenance of differences.

With *sympathy* the case is a little bit different. "Sympathy is a spontaneous affective reaction to another's feelings experiences on the basis of perceived similarities between observer and observed" (Augsburgers 1986:31). Sympathy is therefore about a mutual resonance of painful experiences within the exchange of hurting events. See further figure 1.

<sup>16</sup> By "diagnosis", I mean "to detect and examine all the components contributing to the character and quality of the dynamic of interacting encounters in order to better understand all the undergirding factors that determine the eventual outcome of facing one another and talking together".

- *Introspection* – to probe into basic intentions and undergirding assumptions, presuppositions, and possible prejudices (self-scrutiny and critical self-reflection).
- *Pro-spection* – to use imagination and creativity to design prospective for future reorientation and meetings (anticipation of and reflection on something new that can bring about change) – visioning a possible outcome and future of hope-giving options.
- *Interspection* – the mutual exchange of different views and perspectives in order to promote a sense of co-existence and a mutuality of intersubjectivity and interdependency.
- *Transspecion* – the development of a scopic vision. To start thinking through the mindset of the other and his/her paradigmatic framework.

In a diagnostic approach to religious encounters, the core argument is that transspecion can help to analyse and weigh all viewpoints, theories, patterns of thinking and doctrinal or dogmatic stances in religious encounters (*logos*-probing). This process of critical scrutinising should be embedded in an attitude of compassionate engagement (*pathos*-probing), a disposition of responsibility as directed to the well-being of the other (*ethos*-probing), and a dedicated expression of willingness (teleology) (*prothumos*-probing).

In processes of diagnostic probing, passion (*pathos*) plays a critical and pivotal role in trust-building and the display of dedication and integrity. Its further advantage is that it serves as a cohesive factor between all the components while determining the quality of transactions and establishing a sense of mutual interdependency.

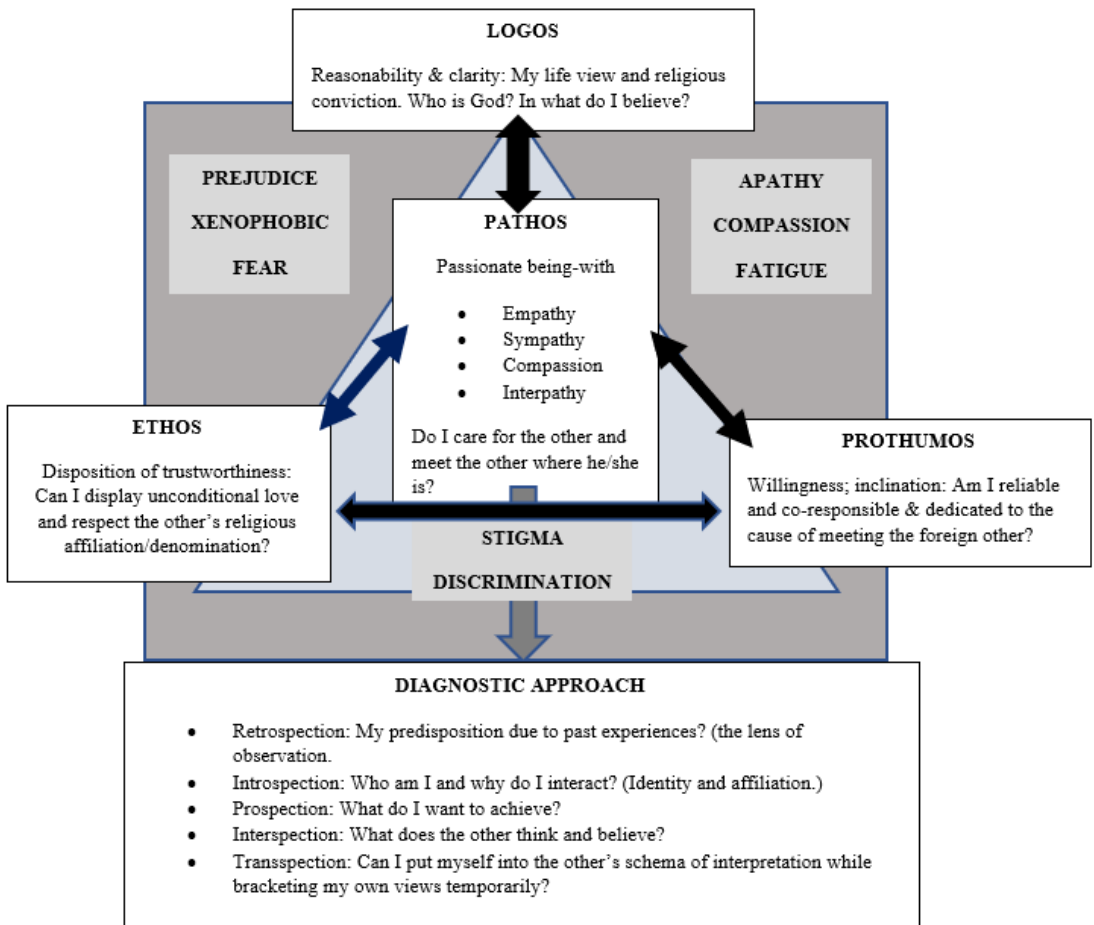
The important point to grasp is that all the aspects together should simultaneously be assessed. The one cannot exist without the other because all components together contribute to the fostering of a spirituality of wholeness, a sense of healing, reconciling and well-being (Louw 2016). This is the reason why every participant in cross-religious encounters should work through the chart as checklist to assess what one can call the scrutiny of the ‘inclinations of the heart’ and the critical analyses of the undergirding ‘scripts’ within the human mind.

Questions are developed on every component to help all participants to perform a kind of self-talk in order to become prepared for cross-religious deliberations. The directives for such self-talk are retrospection, introspection, prospection, interspection and transspecion. Due to the religious scope of these encounters, every participant should perform a God-talk as well (“how do I view God?”). It will help to clarify every participant’s understanding of a supreme being or transcendent realm of life. Without this exercise, the whole endeavour off cross-religious encounter runs the risk of becoming merely a futile exercise or artificial demonstration of cross-religious modesty.

The triangle and all the components of the diagnostic chart are depicted against a shadow side. All forms of interactions, dialogues, and encounters occur within the darker component of stumbling blocks, hassles in interspection, like stigma, apathy and prejudice.

The previously identified directives can be portrayed in the following visual depiction that portrays what a bigger picture in interpathetic and interreligious caregiving entails (Figure 1):

**Diagnostic chart for the development of a scopic vision in interpathetic, interreligious caregiving and cross-religious encounters (figure 1)**



This diagnostic chart is meant to help with cross-religious re-orientation due to the fact that participants in cross-religious encounters are at the start 'foreigners' to one another. Within the context of this scenario, by "unravelling" is then meant "a process of becoming aware of all the conceptual networking perceptions, the mutuality of schemata of interpretation as well as possible undergirding factors playing a role within the space of intersubjective interaction". The different questions help to start with a process of self-awareness and critical self-reflection in order to become engaged in a kind of other-reflection and mindset probing. The visual display of the complexity of cross-religious interaction helps to create an epistemology of critical self-introspection in order to become engaged in processes of transpection. Moving from introspection, through interspection to transpection, promotes trust-building and mutual comprehension. It also helps to create a hospitable atmosphere of being welcome in one another's space. It helps to set the tone for *cross-religious tabernacling*.

## **Religious institutions as safe havens (*xenodochia*) for displaced human beings: Toward the praxis of cross-religious *tabernacling* in pastoral caregiving**

The eventual goal of interpathy is to create a sense of being at home and accepted beyond all forms of isolating scepticism. Levinas (1978:71–72) refers to the fact that the authentic inner life is not about a pious exclusivity and a well established world. What emerges is the huge challenge of taking care of human relational dynamics within the intimate space of consciousness, a consciousness that is like a hut open to all sides and directions. It is as if one dwells in one of the temporary shelters for the *Feast of the Tabernacles* wherein the concrete memory is about life as an exodus.

The narrative of Yahweh's covenantal engagement with his people can be called an event of tabernacling encounters and presence. According to the Hebrew Bible, the tabernacle<sup>17</sup> (Hebrew: *מִשְׁכָּן*, *mishkān*, meaning "residence" or "dwelling place"), also known as the Tent of the Congregation (*אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד* 'ōhel mō'ēd, also Tent of Meeting, etc.), was the portable earthly dwelling place of Yahweh (the God of Israel). In New Testament terminology, it refers to the enfleshment of Christ in a human presence. In terms of pneumatological thinking, tabernacling represents the inhabitation in human flesh and is demonstrated by the charisma of the Spirit in human communication and behaviour.

To my mind, tabernacling in pastoral caregiving enfleshes and demonstrates what the narratives of the Bible are about. They tell just "...such a story where God's purpose from the beginning has been to dwell--or tabernacle--in the midst of the people he has created" (Booth 2015). Tabernacling is about a divine being within the space of time and human existence demonstrating God's vivid presence in life events in my mind; the only visible exponent of compassionate being-with and being-for the other is the notion of *tabernacling*; i.e., when church buildings, temples, mosques, and meeting places of interfaith interconnectedness incarnate and display (through institutional structures) the essence of a religious praxis of concrete co-existing and communal sharing, i.e., religious places as the establishment of xenodochical spaces of trans-xenophobic love, demonstrating valid forms of true, intimate *xenophilia* by means of cross-religious encounters.

In cross-religious caring, it is important that spiritual healing needs concrete spaces wherein hospitality can become visual and real. In this respect, the tradition in Christian spirituality was to view *diakonia* as a concrete expression of compassionate caring. Churches and communities of faith should therefore be in fact a kind of hospice (*hospitium*), a place of refuge and safe haven for displaced human beings. Schipani (2018:211–222) advocates very strongly for faith communities as mediating spaces in encounters with migrants. Compassionate being-with, however, implies 'more', the more of spacing together as a mode of living and sharing (exchange) together – compassionate coexistence.

The following photo is of the church building of the *Methodist Church in Cape Town* wherein refugees gathered in their search for a safe haven of protection during violent attacks on foreigners due to xenophobic suspicion projected by local inhabitants. It depicts what is meant by cross-religious tabernacling.

<sup>17</sup> "The tabernacle represented Yahweh's house among the Israelites—he would soon encamp in his large house in their midst, and they would encamp around his house according to their tribes in concentric circles (Num 2)" (Taylor 2011).



Figure 2: Refugees exposed to xenophobic violence gathering in the Methodist Church. (Refugees in Methodist Church, Cape Town, South Africa, 2019).

During xenophobic violence, many foreigners, displaced refugees and illegal migrants found safety and care within the church in downtown Cape Town. The picture illustrates exactly what is meant by the summoning to become havens of safety and healing: Hospitable *xenodochia*. However, appropriate theory is time and again met by painful resistance and the disillusionment that reality is different than the paradigmatic idea behind it. There occurred an outbreaking of violence within the church building of the *Methodist Church*, and after the *Evangelical Lutheran Church in Athlone* (Cape Flats) gave shelter to displaced people, some of them broke into the church and stole costly liturgical objects while looting the place. This very disillusioning event proves the fact that compassionate being-with is not about ‘success stories’ of performed truth but narratives of even painful disillusionments.

Compassionate being-with operates within the paradox of spiritual expectation and existential disillusionment. After more than a week, the *xenodochia* of the Methodist Church ended in the chaotic turmoil of a violent clash between the refugees and government officials that wanted them to move to governmental sheltering places. This chaotic clash proofs the point: Religion is in the last instance not about the safety of a building but about the vulnerability of caring love and brittle hospitality.

## Conclusion

Inter-religious encounters and dialogues are threatened by social prejudice, xenophobic fear, discriminating stigmatisation, institutional exclusiveness, denominational bluntness, spiritual exhaustion (sloth and apathy) and rigid orthodoxy. Even though religion (from *religare* = tying, knotting together) is originally meant to foster

cohesiveness and promote interconnectedness, religiosity tends to become captured and encapsulated by doctrinal stances that in many cases defend impassive and remote deities, while exercising powerful control and maintaining orthodox blindness.

To make discussions and conversations in interreligious encounters in pastoral caregiving fruitful, a diagnostic chart has been developed. It can help to detect the importance of a systemic approach to the exchange of ideas and viewpoints in intersubjective communication, fostering sound and healthy processes of interspection. The following directives have been identified, namely the role of logical and reasonable argumentation in discourses in order to deal with clarity and the quest for appropriate data (the realm of *logos*); a disposition of trustworthiness in order to deal with integrity and the mutuality of co-responsibility and co-accountability (the realm of *habitus* and *ethos*); a dedication, commitment (kind of covenantal contract) and willingness to become involved and to secure sustainability (realm of *prothumos*); and a passionate outreach to the other in the mode of compassionate being-with (realm of *pathos*).

The real challenge in interreligious encounters is how to get into the mindset and paradigmatic framework of the other, hence the emphasis on interpathy as a kind of pastoral presencing mode in interspection and transspecation. An approach of *interpathetic xenophilia* is proposed in order to foster a framework of trustworthiness and pastoral authenticity in caregiving (*cura animarum*). The latter is about the art and aesthetic ability of bidirectional strength (Augsburger 1986:30): To see and to experience the other as truly other, and the inner wisdom to see oneself also as other – one who is truly other. But in our mutual otherness, we are intrinsically interdependent on one another.

The interpathetic person represents a strange form of *attitudinal*<sup>18</sup> *inhabitation*: “I inhabit, insofar as I am capable of inhabiting, a foreign context” (Augsburger 1986:30). Interreligious and interpathetic caregiving is about compassionate presencing: Being-with, being-fore and being-on-behalf of the other via the mindset and cognitive framework, belief system, existential field of observation and feeling functions of the other.

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<sup>18</sup> A manner of thinking, feeling, or behaving that reflects a state of mind or disposition.



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