

In search of a 'new morality' for South African education – Part VI Values education: Realities, impediments, prospects

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Abstract

In this review we will focus on the way in which profound forces – either positively or negatively – affect and shape our preferences for and interpretation of values, as well as conditions that are beneficial for the re-direction of value-systems.

Opsomming

In hierdie ondersoek sal gefokus word op die wyse waarop bepaalde diepliggende kragte die interpretasie van norme – hetsy positief of negatief – beïnvloed, asook op kondisies wat bevorderlik is vir die her-oriëntering van waarde-sisteme.

1. Opening remarks

Having investigated certain states of affairs (see above) that underlie all attempts at coming to grips with education in general, we are now obliged to establish what *impediments* and *prospects* exist when we intend to pursue a normatively sound education that will satisfy the greater part of our diverse South African population.

Although it may be a truism to say that the South African society of our day is extremely pluralistic, this complex state of affairs makes the attainment of national and social unity complicated, if not very difficult. Human experience and the values-oriented interpretation of events, situations, conditions and the like are always context-bound and historically co-determined. This means that certain external “influences” and “powers” may impinge either negatively or positively on our experience and evaluation of everyday events, situations and conditions. In such cases the biased interpretation of individual as well as group values, priorities, interests, convictions and so forth are often unconsciously universalized as though they were equivalent to those of human society in general or even of humankind itself. Thus, members of a particular cultural or religious community may view and weigh all value-related issues (especially social, economic, political and moral) exclusively in terms of their personal (and group) ideals, aspirations, perspectives and interests.

This imminent danger obliges us to regard all our perceptions of reality, as well as the sum of our deliberated and intentional value judgments, resulting value-related decisions and eventual practical actualization of such values as *potentially dubious* and therefore open to austere critical appraisal that incorporates – above all – the severest form of self-criticism.

In the following paragraphs we will try to account critically for the way in which certain profound forces affect and shape our preferences for and choices of certain values, as well as a selection of positive conditions that are beneficial for the *re-direction* of value-systems.

2. Possible impediments

2.1 The problem of major cultural differences in South Africa

People are born into a particular culture, into a certain way of applying values and doing things *in principle*. As members of a particular culture, people become familiar with conventional interpretations and established (traditional) applications of wide-ranging

values like piety, love, honesty, frugality and the like. However, there is no guarantee that traditional opinions, beliefs, assessments, views and conjectures are necessarily unbiased, acceptable to members of other cultures and can withstand critical scrutiny. Therefore, everyone should be permitted the liberty to develop a critical distance from, as well as the *normative freedom of choice* to shirk what Morrow succinctly characterizes as “uncritical obedience and loyalty to collective beliefs, convictions and established practices” that distinguish the lives of people within different cultural groups (1986:248, also 249).

Few will dispute the immense influence that the cultural affiliations of ordinary people have on their day to day lives and actions. Any underestimation in this regard inevitably amounts to disregarding deliberately the very significant state of affairs, namely that the cultural realm of human life allows for the essential boundaries within which all values achieve relevance. Consequently, the cultural background of men and women will directly affect their interpretation of life values and subsequent priorities given to these¹.

Because culture – the outcome of human formative power over our natural and cultural environments – is essentially human, a culturally neutral sphere of human endeavour is inconceivable. No societal relationship (family, church, state, school, university, business enterprise or whatever) in which we are involved can ever be fancied as existing in isolation from our national and cultural affiliations. Although *nation* and *culture* are different entities with distinct internal structures, they remain inseparable. For any nation, then, to entertain certain cultural preferences, as well as the desire to protect and enhance them, should be regarded as normal and – *in principle*, at least – unproblematic.

1 Those who live within the boundaries of a homogeneous culture will, quite understandably, experience less culture related strife than is the case where ethnic diversity is a prominent feature of a community.

In South Africa a great variety of cultures vie with one another for superiority and may even react aggressively when its (especially political) sphere of influence is doubted or even threatened, thereby causing some sort of resistance that may manifest in the form of a struggle for power on many and diverse fronts. Nonetheless, although cultural differences are very prone to (and admirably suitable for) political manipulation and the acquisition of power, the mere presence of different cultural groupings within the same territory of a state, need not – per definition – spell political conflict. Without doubt, members of dissimilar cultural affiliations can become bound into a national unity if only they can be politically united by some highly prized ideal, value or principle that is shared by the majority.

When considering the values of a “new” South African society where normativity is highly regarded and appreciated by the greater part of the population, one has to bear in mind that cultural divergence has to be bridged in order to gain a perspective on such life values as the majority of our citizens will be comfortable with. This, of course, demands serious and honest self-criticism, along with the willingness and openness to consider and accept the legitimate and well meant censure of those who may disagree or even oppose.

Being critical does not, by definition, imply the rejection of all the customs, institutions, values, principles, etc. of a cultural community. However, what it does demand is the ability to dissociate oneself from the cultural limitations that tend to overcome, even control, one's thoughts and actions. It is imperative that we reflect critically on stereotypes, dogmatic and conclusive answers to certain questions, orthodox proposals for the solution of prevailing social and other problems, simplistic interpretations of complicated states of affairs, rationalizing social injustice, etc. Within the boundaries of the cultural realm of human life, everyone has to discover for him-/ herself which values are true and just and acceptable, and which are false, unjust and therefore untenable. This vital choice is controlled, *firstly* by the ability of the individual

person (whose actions are not all determined by instinct alone) to opt – in total freedom of choice – for right or wrong in every cultural situation of human life that presents itself, and *secondly* by the most profound commitments that do – in the final analysis – *regulate* the thoughts and actions of the individual person, even of communities, and are – unlike the modally restricted cultural aspects of our life – of supra-modal compass.

No culture exists within a void. It is the product of a number of profound forces that impel our formation thereof. It is rooted in the history of a certain segment of humanity and displays the influence of these forces in the manner in which such a group of people live from day to day. More often than not, very little attention is given to these regulating powers that may date back even centuries ago. Nonetheless, they frequently manifest in the subtle nuances that characterize the general behaviour of people, and more specifically in their distinctive interpretation and application of values.

There may also be certain elements in culture that – when aggrandized beyond their actual worth and significance – give rise to certain exclusivist ways of interpreting and evaluating the world we live in and eventually become part and parcel of a distinctive life and world view and accompanying value system.

These unique –often distorted – interpretations and evaluations of reality “return”, as it were, to the originating source in the form of new and often perverted ways of thinking that are aimed solely at the benefit of an associated culture and to the detriment of all others.

These important states of affairs may not be ignored. It will be necessary for us to reflect briefly on the profound forces that influence culture. In the following two paragraphs we will attempt to explore briefly (1) the nature of the human *ethos* and (2) the phenomenon of *ideological error* (the prejudiced, distorted and questionable interpretation of reality).

2.2 Different types of ethos

Troost points out that underlying, but also partly controlling and directing all forms of human premeditation are inherited dispositions

(dominant traits of character) that exert their influence on human conduct. Thus we seem justified to argue that our sensory perception of the world we live in, of all natural and cultural things, our fellow humans as well as their personal and collective circumstances and conditions is undoubtedly the same. On the other hand, our *interpretation* and *explication* of what we perceive may vary significantly from person to person, from group to group, from community to community, even from epoch to epoch. This implies that, apart from, and at a significantly deeper level than the dispositions mentioned above, are the various philosophical explications of reality, and underlying these, the collective world view of a community, directly controlled by subtle nuances of *cultural* and *ideological* origin, and even more profound motivational forces, amongst them, the *human ethos* (cf. Troost, 1959:372ff, 1983:108; also Mannheim, 1972:49-50, 51).

All human activities, except for reflex actions, are guided and regulated by value-related judgments. It is, therefore, clear that *premeditation* plays a decisive role in human behaviour. The conduct of the responsible human being is preceded by “inward” contemplation and evaluation (“inner acts”). Therefore, human actions can be regarded as *intentional*, as thoroughly *premeditated*, thus rendering every human being *accountable* in the strongest possible sense. The very nature of these normative perceptions that precede human actions seems to suggest an extra-logical “domain” of suppositions. From our day to day experience it becomes clear that human behaviour is not always an exclusively logical matter. It unmistakably involves also value-related and deliberate *judgments* based on and driven by faith, trust, conviction, commitment and the like, all of *extra-* and *supra-logical* origin.

When considering human behaviour, the question arises as to the reason(s) why people give different and distinctive interpretations to the same states of affairs and even precedence to certain values to the detriment and disadvantage of others? According to Troost (1983:108, 109), the all-encompassing “mindset” or *ethos* of individual persons and communities that are encompassed by a specific

culture is a *basic layer* or *border area* and the first² phase of expression of the human ego (selfhood) in its tangible, material existence, that is in *concrete actions*. As such it is a *basic motivational force* that concentrates all possible incentives, stimuli and desires into one unified power that impels our actions – directing, regulating and “urging them on” (Troost, 1983:109). Because of its encompassing nature it determines, not only every aspect, facet, sector or function of the life of persons, but also of human society, thereby displaying its supra-individual, essentially social nature (cf. Troost, 1983:110; Mannheim, 1972:2,30ff, 49-53).

Ethos emanates from the most profound convictions³ that are held by individual persons as well as communities (cf. Troost, 1959:372, 1983:108). These deepest convictions and suppositions are, via the ethos, reflected – *inter alia* – in our naïve (non-scientific) experience of the world. Should any basic motivational power possess, latently, an inherent tendency to invent “super-values” and “super-relationships” (cf. *infra*, footnote 4), that is, to overestimate and aggrandize something that is part of our material and cultural world, the stage is set for the entrance of the *absolutization* (deification) of something that relates primarily to our temporal reality, and the attendant reductionist (mis-) interpretations of the latter.

As *ethos*, in itself, is regulated by the basic driving forces that influence human actions, it has a relatively constant and durable nature. Human life, therefore, also displays a certain constancy that

2 In *anthropological* (i.e., not chronological) sense.

3 That there must be a subtle and fundamental relationship between the “meta-dimension” (i.e., ethos, ideology, world-view, philosophy, philosophy of the special sciences and even the various disciplinary matrices) of non-scientific human thinking, as well as all scientific thought, and the most profound forces that shape culture, is clear from the outset (cf. Mannheim, 1972:50-51,52,69). Especially *ethos* is of an intrinsically *religious* nature (*religion* is here understood, not in the – modally restricted – sense of *faith* or *worship* that relate to the meaning nucleus of the *pistic function* of humans, but in the *supra-modal* sense of “in a bond” [*re* = again + *ligo*, *ligare* = to bind] with either the true, or a supposed *archè* [origin] of temporal reality (cf. Dooyeweerd, 1953: 55, 57, 60 ff; Troost, 1983:110-112).

is not necessarily visible in literally every perfunctory pursuit or mechanical activity, but notwithstanding gives a clear-cut and unequivocal *direction* to human life in its totality and our interpretation of values in particular. In other words, underpinning the ever-changing activities of humans, there are deeper influences that are of a much more consistent and continuous nature. Because of its great latitude and depth, this constant “stream” of the human ethos may encompass “centuries, groups of nations” and, in the case of individual persons, “an entire human life” (Troost, 1983:110). Consequently, people as well as communities act and live according to identifiable and appropriate life principles derived directly from a specific type of ethos and its peculiarities.

In our country we encounter seemingly endless mutations and variations of divergent types of ethos and all that they incorporate (personal and collective world-views, ideologies and the like). Thus we can identify an encompassing African ethos, an ethos related to Western civilization, to Eastern civilization, to modern humanism; a Roman Catholic ethos, a Protestant ethos, an Islam ethos and the like. The radical and far-reaching differences that exist between these diverse types of ethos are overwhelming. Once we realize that they lie at the base of all contemporary mindsets (frames of mind) of people and determine and control them completely, in the sense that they encompass and regulate our divergent interpretations and explications of life and the world, the magnitude of the problem regarding values education becomes awesome. The significance of these operational, as well as dormant impediments should be recognized when reflecting on and devising a viable *praxeology* for the implementation of a *new direction* for values education in South Africa.

2.3 Ideology

The question is often asked: Why do people in power – whilst laboring under the false impression that their intentions and actions are in fact noble and praiseworthy – traditionally embrace such reprehensible perceptions of states of affairs and such outrageously distorted accounts of clear cut facts that their interpretation and explication of these become so appallingly offensive to others? In

this section the subtle and undermining role of ideology – as it affects the ways in which people experience reality and the ways in which initially legitimate ideals, values, beliefs and the like eventually dominate discourses about society in general and how these discourses underpin and mould societal structures – has to be explored.

False perceptions and distorted opinions undeniably result in a biased and distorted understanding and explanation of reality in which only personal and group interests, blended with factional welfare, are seemingly relevant. Alternative perspectives and points of view are seldom considered. Those afflicted by this malaise, this (conscious or unconscious) deviation and irrational departure from accurate and valid interpretations of factual states of affairs seem to be doomed to completely bigoted analyses and explications of all issues relating to rival groups, communities etcetera, thereby providing only a “solution in the mind” for discrepancies that are not (and cannot be) solved in practice. It is under such circumstances that unconvincing, questionable, even blatantly false theories and perversions of the truth become highly popular and widespread. In these cases, people adhere tenaciously to ideas and doctrines that are so patently untrue and illusory that otherwise sensitive and sympathetic men and women will often experience little or no moral indignation in the face of gross injustice perpetrated against dominated and oppressed groups, and that they, in their pursuit of lawful life goals and interests, deliberately misinterpret conspicuous states of affairs to suit their own (overt and covert) agendas.

The pursuit of legitimate life objectives becomes ideological the moment when the chosen end relates to only one, idolized (absolutized, deified) *aspect* (e.g. cultural, social, economical), *relationship* (e.g. race, ethnicity, nation, state, church) or *activity* (e.g. science, technology, worship) of our many-sided social world, thereby causing the (illegitimate) appearance of “super-values”.⁴ In this

4 “Super-values” emerge when some values or interests of a group of people are illegitimately given autonomous status and become regarded as *absolute*. They achieve

way, the full meaning of our life world is illegitimately reduced and impoverished, as the remaining aspects, relationships and activities are engulfed by and subordinated to this all-encompassing magnitude that towers above all the rest, while – at the same time – justifying the means employed to impose this anomalous restriction on the remainder.

In this way, *pre-determined* points of view and *narrow-minded* judgments become motivating forces of the group, whilst people become the unwitting and uncritical victims of what Marx appropriately and fittingly designated “*false consciousness*”: those who fall victim to *false consciousness* experience the real world in a distorted and predisposed fashion. *False consciousness* and the concomitant *tunnel vision* it induces render victims thereof oblivious to the fact that their interpretation of reality is essentially foreign to reality itself, as reality is interpreted in terms of unrealistic and bizarre fabrications. Without fail, these fabrications result in a back-to-front (*camera obscura*) representation of how things really are (Leatt, Kneifel & Nürnberger, 1989:209, 275).⁵

The detrimental effect of ideology is of a comprehensive nature. It adversely affects every mode of human existence, every aspect of human culture, and every structure of society. As part of the motivational impetus of ruling classes, ideology distorts collective thinking to become so “intensively interest-bound” to certain

an illegitimate position of dominance over others that, normally, would enjoy relative, as well as co-equal status in relation to other human values and interests. “Super-values” finally subject a host of other norms and values to themselves. Thus, a relative and relational part of our socio-cultural world is erroneously aggrandized to encompass (theoretically) the complete world of human experience. The rightful mandate of many values, as well as interests of persons and societal relationships (family, school, university, church, industry and the like) are either considerably curtailed, or suspended entirely by the conceptual domination of the ideology in question (cf. Visagie & Pretorius, 1993:55, 60).

- 5 Consequently, it is argued that – in essence – ideology can be understood in a negative sense only. It should be used exclusively to denote self-induced tunnel vision. Ideology always represents a reductionist and warped (slanted) perspective of reality and is coercive without exception.

situations that such groups “are simply no longer able to see certain facts which would undermine their sense of domination” (Mannheim, 1972:36). On the other hand, it equally misleads oppressed groups that are focused on the destruction and transformation of a ruling and suppressing élite to the extent “that they unwittingly see only those elements in the situation which tend to negate it” (Mannheim, 1972:36). In this way ideology establishes and perpetuates relations and structures of domination among variant and opposing interest groups in the political struggle for supremacy, not only in the political arena alone, but in literally all extra-political sectors of human life (Strauss & Visagie, 1993:3). Relations of domination should, therefore, be traced meaningfully and exposed remorselessly, thereby uncovering their malevolent workings in, e.g., the media, as well as in everyday contexts like family, workplace, classroom and so forth (cf. Strauss & Visagie, 1993:3).

In the preceding part a rather dismal picture concerning the successful achievement of a “new morality” for education in our country emerges. Yet, if we take account of these real impediments and succeed in eliminating their detrimental and misleading effect, it would seem that a quite positive scenario comes to light. Possibilities in this regard will be analyzed below.

3. Re-directing education: On the threshold of a normatively sound society?

Our “new” South African society, despite the controversial claim that we have the benefit of a “democratic dispensation”, is certainly not perfect, free, socially responsible and egalitarian at all times. Nonetheless, the ideal of a free and democratic society where individual and communal responsibility reigns, is still with us and worthwhile to be given serious thought. Moreover, when considering the prospects for a normatively sound South African society where a new mind-set that tolerates and supports divergent cultures, religions and types of ethos, as well as a government that treats these dissimilarities with due respect and appreciation becomes a reality, we are tempted to argue that we are faced with distinctly positive conditions.

In this regard there appear to be two fundamental issues of great significance that require our careful attention. They are intricately interwoven and should never be considered in isolation from one another. These are (1) the *nature and origin of values* that are identified by a person or a community as appropriate and essential to implement in practical life situations, and (2) the *authority that confronts and obliges us* to comply with these values by bringing them to bear (activating them) in day to day life situations *in a responsible manner*.

3.1 Universal starting points for values interpretation and application

In an earlier analysis we introduced a wide and encompassing selection of values that relate to the normative aspects of human life and behaviour. These are *commonly shared values* and all deserve to be identified and emphasized at some stage or another during education at home, in the church or at school. It must be pointed out once more that these values are not of speculative (metaphysical) origin and were not derived from any transcendental source *per se*. They are all true to the reality of our everyday experiences. They can be identified, analyzed and tested experimentally by anyone and will endure the test of empirical investigation. They correlate with real life and are, therefore, authentic. Furthermore, they represent *supra-individual, transpersonal* “anchor” values that apply to literally every person, regardless of time and historical situation. These universal values should be refined and applied (effectuated or implemented) in every practical life situation by legitimate, responsible and accountable *authorities* according to the particular demands of changing and disparate circumstances.

Moreover, these *ontic structures* and *modally related values* that we encounter everywhere cannot be altered or “amended” arbitrarily; neither can “new” ones be devised and developed. Moral issues that we encounter every day will remain forever of patently ethical (moral) concern; logical issues will at all times remain strictly related to the logical mode of our lives with its characteristic analytical nature; economic matters display a strictly economic character; family

affairs always remain discernable as those typical of family life; state is distinguished by its demonstrably “state-like” nature (structure) and function, etc.

These universal *structures* do not, in any way, impinge on our freedom as humans to bring them to bear in practical life situations. On the contrary, they provide the essential and unchangeable parameters that encompass the free and (normatively) correct operation of persons, social collectivities or whatever for all time and circumstance. No one can, arbitrarily, alter the unique boundaries that either *qualify* the modal aspects of our lives, or *found* and *characterize* the modally qualified societal structures as we know them here and now. These can only be *redeployed* in different and distinctive *directions*.⁶

All the “states of affairs” that we surveyed in the preceding paragraphs are connected – in some way or another – with (ontic) *structures*. It is for this reason that – notwithstanding all the tangible impediments that may impinge negatively on our ideal of realizing a *new* and *re-directed* normativity for South African education and our nation as a whole, certain remarkably positive *prospects* in this respect do, doubtlessly, exist. Because we are all bound to the same *ontic principles* and *structures* that were given with creation, there is *hope* that these can be re-acknowledged, agreed upon and applied in practical life situations by the majority of our people. These positive prospects for the emergence of an altered *direction* for South African education that lays the foundation for a new normative fibre of our nation can – eventually – permeate in a beneficial and constructive way to all sections of our society, and diminish the effects of many impediments, especially those caused by divergent interpretations of *values* and *structures*.

6 For the Christian there are basically only two options, namely those of (for the most part) *anastate* or (completely) *apostate* nature. This means that there is no need to “invent” a so-called “new” morality. What is obligatory is a *critical reappraisal* of the *direction* in which moral values are amended and remodeled. This can be accomplished only by a *fresh commitment* and *obedience* to the Word of God. In the final analysis, every ostensibly “outdated”, “obsolete” or “old-fashioned” morality and any new-found “modern” morality both remain of exactly the same *moral* nature.

As we have seen above (part I of this investigation), supporters of *individualist liberalism* declare humankind free to choose those principles that regulate their every day actions solely in accordance with the unique demands of each discrete and isolated set of circumstances. In other words, the (historical) *situation* alone coerces the interpretation of appropriate values that are to regulate our conduct. For too many of our people, the only and absolute authority appears to be the individual person him-/ herself. The existence of all external forms of authority, principles and norms are rejected in favour of the principle of egoistic self-indulgence. Everyone is thus seen as free to do as they like and to choose also the deepest meaning of their lives.

This false impression entertained by so many is demonstrably in conflict with reality. The *crux* of the matter is that, should the origin of principles and norms that regulate our interpretation of reality and our eventual (normative or anti-normative) actions not transcend the individual person and there is no accountability to some higher authority, then it is inevitable that values will be regarded as contingent, arbitrary and unpredictable. *But this is not the case*. We are all bound to the same values and ontic structures that we experience in our everyday lives. By virtue of the creational order for all things, the particular and unique *structures* of diverse phenomena (of *ontic, anthropological, as well as epistemological* nature) remain the same for everyone, at all times and under all circumstances. Only the *direction* of their specific implementation may differ from person to person and from situation to situation⁷.

Furthermore, our present approach indisputably endeavours to recognize the true origin, identity and value of every human *modus quo* in its own right. The identification and acknowledgement of the

7 Thus, the ontic structure of faith or belief is the same for one and all; “un-belief” (agnosticism; atheism) or “disbelief” (incredulity; skepticism) are distinct possibilities, but “non-belief” does not exist. Likewise, the ontic structure of love is valid for everyone; hate is an alternative, but “non-love” is impossible; the ontic structure of justice holds good for all time and place; injustice is an option, but “non-justice” is non-existent; the formation of culture is the same everywhere, irrespective of predilection, time or place, etc.

uniqueness of each mode of human life allows for and assures the correct and non-reductionist analysis of analogical moments that – on their part – yield the great many possibilities of value enrichment that has to take place at home and in literally every subject of the school curriculum, as well as at institutions for tertiary education (cf., for instance literature, art appreciation, ethics, logic, sociology, economics etc.).⁸

3.2 Responsibility as common human attribute

It is unthinkable that any community of people will ever intentionally and deliberately opt for an anti-normative, dishonest, immoral or unlawful life style⁹. This seems to suggest that humans have an innate *sense of responsibility* that apparently – in most cases at least – transcends their temporal lives and personal and communal benefit/ gain. This fact can be considered as a possible regulative power in our search for an acceptable praxeology for forthcoming values education.

In terms of the Kantian hypothesis regarding human willingness to act in terms of generally accepted values, all humans¹⁰ are viewed – most probably with justification – as endowed with the ability and desire to rise above mere instinctive (stimulus-response) actions. However, confronted by the bleak realities that characterize human nature in general we may be inclined to argue that while this model is certainly not completely unachievable, the ideal of habitual and dependable human righteousness and integrity is seldom accomplished. Indeed, day to day reality paints a rather depressing picture in this regard. The reason for this realistic pessimism is that

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- 8 Should anyone contest the legitimacy of any of the “anchor” values mentioned above, or find them inappropriate for our modern times, it must be done in terms of sound ontological arguments. If not, all these values should figure as part and parcel of education in the family, at school and in the church.
- 9 Even if such an improbable scenario had been workable, anti-normativity inevitably involves a choice of values, albeit a negative choice.
- 10 Except those who, for reasons outside their control are not capable of being held accountable.

our personal and collective awareness and appreciation of the crucial issues of life (meaning, origin, destination, happiness, suffering, and so forth) fundamentally affect, shape and ultimately determine the way in which we judge the inner acts (values interpretation) that undergird and prompt our everyday behaviour and activities (values application). In this process of developing a special and premeditated view of human life and the world, a mental attitude in respect to the central questions of life, religious convictions (faith) etcetera is of prime importance and underpins our justification of whatever we may contemplate and eventually do.

With humankind's fall into apostasy, we did not become demons. By God's *common grace* we remained human, retaining all our inborn human faculties, potential and attributes. Nonetheless, human endeavour would no longer be focused spontaneously and solely on the glory of God, but henceforth directed elsewhere.¹¹ It is therefore not strange that, unlike animal behaviour, human judgments, choices and eventual actions are neither guaranteed purely by *instinct*, nor simply restricted to a specific *environment*. Humans are still endowed with the gift of *judgment*. This eminently human potential implies that human judgment is always distinguished by a personal (and collective) *value related* (that is, *normative*) *freedom of choice*. This quality allows every human person to enter into and function in the multi-faceted dimension of *right* and *wrong*, *good* and *evil*, etc.

Humans are also known to have a *conscience*. This acknowledged phenomenon refers to our apparently "inborn" ability to distinguish critically between what is *good* and what is *evil*, *right* and *wrong*, *just* and *unjust*, *acceptable* and *unacceptable*, etc.¹² As seen in a previous context, the ability to make these distinctions signifies that

11 Only in Christ is the primordial relationship between Creator and creature restored and all our ventures *re-directed* at Him.

12 Good and evil, right and wrong, etc. are not restricted to moral/ethical matters alone: What is commonly designated uncritically as simply "morally or ethically sound" involves all value-related spheres of human endeavour/ life, for instance, morally right or wrong, juridically right or wrong, economically right or wrong, socially right or wrong, logically right or wrong, etc.

– as humans – we are *regulated* in our post-natural activities, not by natural laws, but by cultural *values* or *norms*. Indeed, we all share some or other deep-seated notion about what life, as such, involves, and have clarity about what exactly the most profound values in our personal lives and that of our communities encompass (cf. Strauss, 2009:41-42; also Troost, 1983:112-113).

Nonetheless, not everyone necessarily holds the same values as imperative and fundamental in the same way as others may do. The significance (and appeal) of particular values in the case of different persons, communities, cultures and the like may differ radically as they always cohere with the most profound and completely disparate driving motives that impel the lives of such persons, groups of people, communities, even cultures (cf. Strauss, 2009:40-41). As value-oriented and -regulated beings we are (and can be held) *responsible* for our (*value*) decisions and eventually for all our (*value-determined* and *-directed*) endeavours in literally all the normative spheres of our lives¹³.

The purported and self-styled “ethic of free responsibility”, that is, the contemporary uncritical and erroneous idea that all free, supposedly autonomous, and responsible human beings possess the *same* standard or quality of “morality”, is well known and very popular. Subsequent to Kant’s humanistic anthropology¹⁴ centering round his idea of a *categorical imperative*, modern men and women

13 The so-called “golden rule” for human behaviour (as found in Matt. 7:12) namely “whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them ...” (neighbourly love) is very relevant for our current and forthcoming investigation. However, *by itself*, it is contentless and consequently well-suited for all kinds of biased interpretation. For instance, those who are motivated by egotistic self-interest like the powerful and affluent will probably interpret this adage differently than the powerless and indigent. It has to become *real* in some or other religious terms. This matter will be treated in more detail in the next Part (VII).

14 Following Kant’s notion of a commonly shared “rationality”, all humans are widely considered to share a “prior” perception of what is “good” and “evil”. This allegedly “typically human” attribute allows for a commonly shared “discretion” and “judgment” that will routinely manifest in a “natural” and “socially ‘acceptable’” responsibility when it comes to the choice of life values and subsequent value related endeavours, enterprises and actions.

wholeheartedly and unreservedly endorse the optimistic postulate that humans – on an average – are noble and untarnished in their choice of life values and principles and their ensuing actions.

Although all humans are currently widely understood by most as being “laws unto themselves” and never accountable to any external authority for their personal thoughts and acts, moral dissolution, as well as social disorder and eventual mayhem will not occur simply because all – supposedly emancipated men and women – possess an inborn conscience and know “intuitively” how to behave virtuously. Neither does everyone have the innate ability to act in such a way that *all “moral” deeds* can be “universalized” to serve as examples of virtuous moral actions to all other human beings. The problem is, namely, that this optimistic position that relates directly to Kant’s *categorical imperative* is – essentially – without content and invites free interpretation.

As only human beings possess this ability to premeditate and reflect critically on their future exploits, only they can be held accountable (responsible) for every action. Being *responsible* is, therefore, the capacity to *answer*¹⁵ in an *accountable* manner. The concept of “responsibility” does imply *being approached* or *being addressed beforehand*. Like all living things, humans respond to incentives or prompts from their natural environment and these impact on their receptive systems.¹⁶ Nevertheless, as we have seen, they also respond to “stimuli” that derive from their cultural environment and come to them as the obligation to opt for *cultural values*.

So, to maintain that we are *responsible* is to raise two questions of fundamental importance, namely (1) that regarding the “source” of our “being addressed” and (2) that concerning the “target” or objective of our “being responsible”: *who* or *what* addresses us and

15 Fritz Heinemann even went so far as to suggest substituting the Cartesian “*I think, therefore I am*” with “*I answer, therefore I am*” (cf. Troost, 1983:131).

16 Given their biased and inadequate anthropological premises, behaviourists reject the possibility of premeditated and value related human responsibility, dignity, compassion and so forth as a delusion because they regard humans as mere stimulus-response beings.

in what *way* and to *what* or to *whom* are we *accountable*? In other words, human life – in its totality – is nothing but a *re-action* to being confronted (accosted/ addressed) by something higher and more powerful than ourselves, to whom (which) we respond or answer in complete obedience. The question concerning a *final authority* (deity, thing, entity, collective, person, self, structure, situation or whatever) that commands universal obedience hence presents itself with singular urgency.

It is not possible to conceive of and formulate the true nature of responsibility apart from a clear view regarding a “final authority” or sure Ground (ground). Indeed, in the last instance it is our very “relatedness” to some or other *final authority* that prompts and controls the specific and distinctive *direction*¹⁷ in which our value related responses (accountable actions) are going to proceed. Troost associates this tendency to concentrate divergent (i.e., modally diverse) responsibilities in one *focal point* with the innate human desire to find a *denominator* in which and from which all our responses (actions) find and derive their deepest meaning (cf. 1983: 135ff). Thus, uncountable and diverse individual actions are merged into a cohering and distinguishing *unity of direction* that is unbreakably connected with an idea of an origin.

The crucial question at this stage is the following: to what extent is the optimistic humanist dogma that all humans honour the same values and will duly act responsibly, possible in our lives? Although not entirely without merit, this appears to be a somewhat debatable matter. It would seem that the sanguine confidence displayed by Kant and most humanists is contradicted by reality. In view of states of affairs and our own personal and collective experiences it appears that this figment of human imagination – promising and exciting as it may seem – is as a rule not achievable. Indeed, many external influences that may sway the interpretation of individual as well as group values have already been identified and discussed

17 Basically (i.e., in terms of the religious antithesis between Light and darkness) of either *anastate* or *apostate* nature.

above. This problem unavoidably leads us to reflect on the dynamics underlying human motivation and demands not only a critical spirit, but rigorous self-criticism.

As there is such an overwhelming diversity of modal aspects, structures, relationships (or a combination of any of these) that qualify – each in its distinctive way¹⁸ – to become a source of absolutization, the *unity of direction* in which human responsibilities concentrate¹⁹ themselves and control and direct human lives, presents countless options. Among many “modern” options we encounter *humanistic* directions like *moralism*, *personalism*, *ecnomism*, *socialism*, *communism*, *diverse non-Christian religious convictions*, etc. In all these instances a “moralistic absolutising of the ‘ethics’ of neighbourly love in human relations” (Troost, 1983:136) directs the practical implementation of all human responsibilities. Inspired by the humanist ideal of human freedom, all aspects and structures of human responsibility are arbitrary, and the ultimate *unity of direction* as we have singled out above is devoid of the profundity and compass that characterizes an interpretation of these matters based on the fundamentals of Christian religion.

Once Christ, Himself, becomes the central and transcendent “Denominator” for human responsibility, the struggle for priority among diverse *supposed* “denominators” is circumvented and true and harmonious *unity of direction* is restored. Inspired by a *Christian motivating power* the final, albeit multi-faceted, *unity of direction* for human responsibility is found in the complete service of God (cf. Troost, 1983:137). Through God’s Revelation in Christ we discover that the *dual commandment of love* (that transcends and encompasses all manifestations of love in temporal human relationships)

18 As this matter has been treated extensively in a preceding study, it will not feature here again.

19 The essence of which is, routinely and in theory at least, diverse manifestations of “neighbourly love”, as become apparent in respect of human freedom, human life, human dignity, as well as other humane values like tolerance, consideration, helpfulness, kindness, caring, cooperation, hospitality and the like, cf. Troost, 1983:135ff.

is the one and only way that can possibly *unite* and *direct* multi-faceted human responsibility in a *harmonious* and *balanced* way. Outside of this concentration in Christ, human life as well as human responsibility is fundamentally disintegrated because of the diverse idols humans pay homage to. Similarly, human responsibility also becomes basically superficial and – followed to its logical conclusion – eventually cannot elude complete meaninglessness.

Truly free people – unburdened by all kinds of ideological domination – can act responsibly more readily than those who are still smothered therein. Adherence to values cannot be imposed on people from the outside, which is from the top down. It must *grow internally*, from the bottom up. In a socially accountable society, individual, as well as communal responsibility completely depends on the absence of harmful coercion, whether it originates in the devious and malevolent minds of autocrats, or in the dire living circumstances that some people are weighed down with²⁰. Only where genuine human freedom is guaranteed, law-giver, as well as law-abider is at liberty to display either his/ her true authority, or to act with genuine responsibility.

4. In sum

As has transpired above, cultural diversity with all its distinct and intrinsically exclusive characteristics and dividing and isolating ramifications, complicate the co-existence of dissimilar cultures in a shared geographical territory. Nonetheless, there appear to be certain positive influences of ontic and anthropological nature that doubtlessly place the objective of national unity despite cultural diversity within reach.

With this in mind, it becomes necessary to establish how we are to aspire for and proceed to mould/ fashion a new perspective and fresh objectives for South African education and a united South African nation that has the ability to

20 For instance, people who do not eat may show very little appreciation for pleas to uphold splendid and otherwise admirable moral standards. They may opt to thieve to survive!

- encompass and appease the divergent *cultures* and lay to rest their inborn suspicions and distrust of, and instinctive dislike for others, as well as potential conflict arising from incompatible types of *ethos* and *ideological distortions*;
- eliminate the bane of narrow-mindedness and intolerance that endorse and reinforce false and misleading interpretations of reality, coupled with a stubborn reluctance (even refusal) to co-operate, compromise and adapt, and to
- prepare the way for a final discussion of parameters within which a viable praxeology for education in South Africa can become a reality.

In the following section we will endeavour, *inter alia*, to single out common targets that can serve as goals for education on a national scale, as well as to identify parameters for a viable praxeology aimed at *re-directing* normativity for South African education and the South African population as a whole.

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