Chapter 4

Finding an academic voice in post-apartheid South Africa: Systematic Theology at the University of Pretoria

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■ On 'speaking from' and 'speaking to'

'D'où parlez-vous?' was always the first question that the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005) asked of his students in the 1970s in his Philosophy seminars in Paris, France. Translated from French into English, the first question was: *Where do you speak from?* The Irish philosopher Richard Kearney, now Charles Seelig professor of Philosophy at Boston College in the USA, was one of the students who attended Ricoeur's seminars. Kearney (2010:xi) refers to Ricoeur's question in the opening statement of his widely read and influential philosophical writing on returning to God after God, namely *Anatheism*. In this chapter, we argue that it might be helpful to explore Kearney's reference to Ricoeur, self-critically asking the very same question of the Department of Dogmatics and Christian Ethics in the FT at the UP in SA in the 21st century: *Where do we speak from?*

'Where do we speak from?' entails as enquiry the following questions: Who are the 'we' that are doing the teaching and research. In what context(s) are we pursuing our teaching and research endeavours. What are we doing, how do we go about our pursuits, and why are those important to us? The answers to these questions – although not all of them will be addressed explicitly – give flesh (and blood) to the very basic hermeneutical questions: Who is saying what to whom, why, where and when.[32] After a brief description of the historical background of the Department, the broad outlines presented as our 'speaking from' are highlighted by focusing on each member of our

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32. With this formulation, the very important challenge that was posed by the vice chancellor of the University of the Free State, Prof. Jonathan Jansen, to the FT at the Free State University must be kept in mind. It gave rise to their important publication on epistemological transformation in the South African tertiary context with the title *Transforming theological knowledge: Essays on theology and the university after apartheid* (Venter & Tolmie 2013) as response to the challenge. In this publication, there are very insightful articles on the teaching and research activities of their current academics as response to the *what* and *why* questions on teaching and research practices.

Department and, subsequently, each member's specific research contributions (speaking to).[33] Then the most important aims and outstanding issues that are currently pursued are indicated. The history of the Department, spanning the period from its inception in 1938 to 1999 (the other line from 1917 to 1999) and then from 2000 to 2013, has already been recorded in earlier articles.[34] The most comprehensive articles[35] on this history are those by Koekemoer (1992), Oberholzer (1992), Van der Merwe & Vos (2009) and Wethmar and Veldsman (2013). The chequered history of the Department with its name changes, the two sections for theological training (Section A and Section B) which housed the later divided departments, the new history of one Faculty after 2000 and its re-establishment as one Department after 2000 is not the focus of our exposition. However, the current composition and objectives of its theological research and some of its teaching foci are explicated. To appreciate this history fully, it has to be read from the perspective of the rich and wide-ranging academic heritage left by its immediate predecessors,

33. The director of the Centre for Public Theology, Prof. Vyuani Vellem who has also been a member of the Department since October 2010, was unfortunately not available to contribute to this overview. He is an ordained minister in the Uniting Presbyterian Church of South Africa. He studied at Fort Hare, the University of Cape Town and the University of Pretoria where he completed his PhD with the title 'The symbol of liberation in South African public life: A black theological perspective' (2007). He is a specialist in Liberation Theology. He focuses his research on themes such as Christianity and democracy, Christianity and economics and on fields such as Ecclesiology, Public and Liberation Theology and Spirituality. Four of his most recent publications in 2015 are 'Unshackling the Church', 'Tumelo le Moruo', 'Black Theology of Liberation and the Economy of life' and 'Black Theology of liberation: A theology of life in the context of Empire'.

34. From 2000 onwards, the Faculty dissolved the A and B sections and became one Faculty.

35. See also the recent article by Ungerer (2015) for historical detail of the history of the Faculty. In my unpublished inaugural address, *Constructively engaging in post-dogmatic Dogmatics,* a summary is given of all the current research foci of the Department in relation to world-wide trends in systematic-theological teaching and research (cf. Veldsman 2014a).

namely Ben Engelbrecht, Johan Koekemoer, Johan Heyns, Conrad Wethmar and Etienne de Villiers.[36]

The approach to answering the question '*Where do the members of the Department of Dogmatics and Christian Ethics speak from?*' should originate from within the vision of the Department in which it is deeply embedded. In its vision, it is stated that the Department is to conduct programmes for teaching, research and community service in the field of doctrinal theology, systematic reflection, Christian ethics and philosophy of religion in an internationally and locally relevant manner. It is a vision that is pursued in a multi-church environment which implies that the opportunity exists for different church traditions to be adequately represented and for these traditions to also be encouraged to enter into a creative and scholarly dialogue with one another. The vision is translated into five objectives. These are to provide relevant theological and religious education; to nurture transformative leaders; to perform quality research; to promote justice, peace, the integrity of creation and a reconciling diversity; and finally, to engage people on the margins of society. The values that find expression in the pursuit of these objectives are critical thinking, intellectual excellence, transformational praxis and inclusivity. We now turn to the research interests of the respective departmental members.

■ Academic pursuits: Where do we speak from?

■ Buitendag: On eco-hermeneutics

Johan Buitendag is an ordained minister of the NRCA. He completed his dissertation on *Skepping en ekologie* in 1985

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36. For overviews on the rich and important heritage, see Van der Merwe (2000) on Koekemoer, Wethmar and Vos (1998) on Heyns, Wethmar and Veldsman (2012) on De Villiers; and Veldsman (2008) on Wethmar.

and took up a part-time position as Senior Lecturer in the Department (Section A) in 1989, succeeding G.C. Velthuizen. He was appointed permanently in 2001. After a period during which he was Deputy Dean (2004–2009) and Head of the Department, he became Dean of the Faculty, a position that he still holds.[37] His supervisor, Ben Engelbrecht, focussed mainly on a Barthian approach in his career. An important theological shift took place back then, turning from strict traditional dogmatic-confessional reflection to a broader systematic-theological engagement.

As academic, Buitendag never proposed to present any complete or even definable theological design himself. Theology is for him far too wide, too deep and too high for such attempts. He also did not present his theology as taking a finally shaped theology as point of departure. His theological journey which dates back to his high school years unfolded seekingly and existentially between several beacons (see Van Aarde & Van Wyk 2014:11–13).

His theology has an unfolding and emerging nature. As it develops, it becomes refined and expands laterally. That is why he likes the image of a rhizome that Gilles Deleuze uses. To him, this is almost a poetic description of Faraday's field theory in electromagnetic radiation. Reality is not elements or atoms but energy fields in-between.

Theology is an understanding of reality (Buitendag 2013) or, put more correctly, a humble attempt to be a responsible discourse partner in the human being's search for meaning and understanding. He is of the opinion that theology can contribute to the understanding of reality. Therefore, he also prefers the word 'understand' to a word like 'viewpoint'. Understanding is indeed subjective, but at least, it has a rational and critical claim.

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37. See the Festschrift for Buitendag, edited by Andries Van Aarde and dedicated to Johan Buitendag at the event of his 60th birthday: *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 70(1).

The dialogue with other sciences is therefore extremely important (cf. Buitendag 2014a, 2014b). He argues that we should listen to one another and learn from one another. Theology should also have a stand at university and should engage in an accountable and reasonable manner with other sciences. The analogy of faith and reason speaking two different languages (Einstein) seems to him a confusion of tongues. Somewhere, theology should partake in the lingua franca of the day.

If Buitendag has to point to one book that decisively shaped his understanding of reality at the beginning of his academic career, it has to be Jan Smuts's *Holism and evolution*. Smuts draws a line with the sequence *matter – life – mind*. This line is admittedly linear, yet remarkable. Smuts' discourse partners were also Einstein and Darwin and hence Buitendag's interest in their respective points of view. Subsequently, he occupied himself with two disciplines in the natural sciences, namely, Physics (Buitendag 2008) and Biology (Buitendag 2012a). He regarded Physics as important for understanding time and space and Biology for knowing more about life. His thesis, completed in 1985, pertained to creation and ecology, and in it, he had already drawn the contours of a theologically accountable understanding of reality. The Apostles' Creed sees creation as the work of the Father, Karl Barth explains it Christologically while it is clear to Buitendag that creation called for pneumatological reflection. Therefore, the later 'pneuma-theology' of Gijs Dingemans rather appeals to him.

This engagement with insights from physics and evidence from biology shaped him gradually to reflect increasingly in a more inductive and *a posteriori* way on reality. Theistic language of revelation is neither heard nor appreciated by people outside of theology. He realised increasingly that the fierce resistance against a natural theology caused much damage to Protestant theology. It became elitist and removed itself from the scholarly debate. He sensed in his own mind a shift away from discontinuity to continuity in our symbolic universum. This implied for

Buitendag that some *theologoumena*[38] necessarily had to be translated in a new way (cf. Buitendag 2012d). Of utmost importance is probably the radical revision which he had to make in his mind about our understanding of revelation and the Bible (Buitendag 2008). Like Brunner, he is of the opinion that the human being has a certain natural capacity to engage with God and that much insight can be provided by nature. Thus the description of reality by quantum physics is not just a handy metaphor for scholars in the humanities but provides an essential understanding of reality. The same is relevant to the ant or the bee, for example. Empirical studies indicate that what happens in the nest of termites or in the beehive applies mutatis mutandis to human societies (Buitendag 2013). Our symbolic universe is a much more integrated but yet pluralistic whole than a dichotomist yin-yang image.

In a certain sense, Buitendag's whole theological enterprise is a conceptual juggle with ontology and epistemology – an expression he took from the Dutch theologian Luco van den Brom: the theologian as a juggler (Buitendag 2012b, 2012c). For Buitendag, Systematic Theology is a humble endeavour to come to grips with reality. Understanding reality is what science is about. It is his conviction that theology can indeed contribute to this end and subsequently has to engage in scholarly dialogue with others. Theology has a cognitive approach to reality, one which regards nature as knowable and therefore understandable. There are no hidden secrets for theologians to disclose! However, he argues, we can augment a frame of reference to unveil prejudices, assumptions and one-dimensionality. The natural, physical, biological, human and social worlds are the realm of God's immanent presence and therefore the manifestation of a divine creative action. Due to the involvement of the total human being, such a view is consciously – and subconsciously –

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38. Buitendag lists a few of these *theologoumena* which he considers in need of review regarding a theological understanding of reality in the 21st century. They are the *Bible, Original sin, Descensus, Image of God* and *Filioque* (see, e.g., Buitendag 2012d).

shaped within a bio-cultural framework. To express this, he used the word 'triangulation'. The meticulous investigation of the natural scientist, the richly imaginative horizons of the artist and the divine far-sightedness of the theologian are brought into discourse with one another, leading to an appreciation which is larger than the sum of the parts.

■ Veldsman: On religious experience from evolutionary perspectives

Danie Veldsman is an ordained minister of the DRC. He completed his dissertation titled 'Etisering – Personalisering – Eksistensialisering' in 1987 and took up a position as Senior Lecturer in the Department in August 2007, succeeding Conrad Wethmar. He has been heading the Department since 2011. His research focus and contribution can be described as a reconceptualisation of religious experience from evolutionary perspectives within the science-theology dialogue (cf. Veldsman 2013a, 2014a, 2014b). What does the reconceptualisation entail?

It reflects on our relationship with God from our concrete existence as human beings of flesh and blood, that is, as historical-contextual human beings that are biologically woven together. It further reflects on our faith relationship from within an awareness of our biological and physical make-up and the constraints that determine our being human (cf. Veldsman 2013c). The reconceptualisation entails reflecting from evolutionary perspectives, in a critical and an interdisciplinary manner, on the relationship between us as people living in the world and God as Creator and Saviour of the world. This implies that we need to put together the best theological and the best scientific insights in a comprehensive, integrated manner to open up new and exciting horizons of insight into being human in the world before God (cf. Veldsman 2013a; 2013d). It entails reflection that is permeated by the most basic (negative) conviction: no evolution, no experience, no religion. Formulated as a positive conviction, it entails that evolutionary developments with regard

to self-consciousness made religious experience possible. To mention just one example of an important contribution from evolutionary insights, I refer to the cognitive-affective character of being human (cf. Veldsman 2014c). We are woven together biologically in this manner. In everyday metaphoric language, it means that our heads are located within our hearts (and vice versa). It is not possible to separate the two. We are wired and strung together in this way by our nervous system (cognitive) and blood network (affective) that interacts in such a manner with the world in which we live connectedly and with which we interact to enable (self)conscious experiences. The two networks always operate and function together. The affective dimension forms the most basic layer of being (self)conscious human beings. It is a stratification of our being (self)conscious that consists of mood, emotions and feelings. To put it in faith terminology with the help of the French philosopher and theologian Blaise Pascal, we love God with our hearts, not with our reason(s). According to Pascal, the heart has reasons of which reason itself is not even aware! It is on this relationship of faith that we reflect in an interdisciplinary manner with all the other sciences. It is to study 'reasons' that have been moulded over centuries by evolutionary processes and developments in our interactions and connectedness with all of creation. Most of these reasons lie embedded in our being human and finds expression in our emotions as an integral rational part of our cognitive interaction within the world. In influential paleoanthropological and neuroscientific discourses, it is explicitly stated that emotions represent the embodiment of the logic of human survival. In short, we survive as human beings where 'survival of the fittest' implies neither physical strength nor primarily adaptability (although it is extremely important). Rather, it implies our ability to care, to have empathy, to show compassion and love, to kindle hope – all flowing from our cognitive-affective composition in our interaction with the world and towards others (cf. Veldsman 2013b, 2014c).

Our cognitive-affective composition and our connectedness with creation determine our faith relationship with God, with all

others and with the world. This conviction forms the basic thrust of post-dogmatic reflection that finds expression in numerous ways in our systematic-theological curriculum.[39] One such way is reflection on the important role of art (especially icons), music, the film industry and philosophical discourses (e.g. anatheism) in our deep relationship with God that oozes life. Perhaps formulated more systematically, I claim that a post-dogmatic dogmatics represents a very specific hermeneutical attitude and approach that starts with experience.[40] Experience is here seen not as the primary and exclusive source of all of our reflection but specifically as a vehicle for all our interdisciplinary theological reflection, as embodied human beings, on God, revelation, Christ and the Holy Spirit, being human, the Bible, salvation, what we dare to hope, et cetera (cf. Veldsman 2014a). It represents a hermeneutical interdisciplinary (cognitive-affective) willingness to look concrete life before God and with all others in the world straight in the eye! It entails a cognitive-affective willingness that will take its own historicity and context seriously so that that embodied personhood will find concrete expression in the moment 'when we speak' with others, at different places, on various occasions and on diverse issues on our relationship with God from multilayered and coloured life perspectives.[41] Hermeneutics (as the art of understanding) then becomes a school of life for being humble and for explorative imagination. Reflection ultimately becomes part of an exciting cultural-linguistic process or cognitive-affective event of layered signification that reminds us incessantly of the depth of alterity that cannot be exhaustively or lightly fathomed.

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39. The basic thrust can also be seen and described as an exercise in cultural-religious literacy.

40. A post-dogmatic Dogmatics never implies that we leave dogmatic reflection as such 'behind us'. It will always be an integral dimension of all reflection. It however wants to convey a specific hermeneutical attitude and disposition that takes seriously embodied personhood with all its limitations and determinations as historical-contextual living beings.

41. From this approach flows spontaneously the focus on concrete issues within the South African context such as the theological-existential importance of water, to give but one example (see Veldsman 2015).

■ Fourie: On defining morality in Africa

Willem Fourie, an ordained minister, completed his dissertation in 2009. It was later published as *Communicative freedom: Wolfgang Huber's theological proposal* (Fourie 2012a; also see Fourie 2014). He took up a position as Senior Lecturer in the Department in January 2011, succeeding Etienne de Villiers. In his research, he investigates the possibility and contours of an ethic of sociality that is useful in postcolonial, pluralist and unequal societies. His focus is the postcolonialities, pluralisms and inequalities of southern Africa.

In Fourie's opinion, the ongoing efforts by both academics and students to 'Africanise' especially the human sciences in many ways resonate with key themes in the Reformed tradition. To him, the core of this call lies in the challenge of claiming, or in some senses reclaiming, African intellectual subjectivity. The Reformed tradition is known for its emphasis on the faithful embodiment of the Christian faith in concrete socio-cultural circumstances. He highlights three elements of this thrust (cf. Fourie 2011a). The Reformed tradition, firstly, emphasises the importance of embodiment. To be a Christian only makes sense if it is concretised and enacted in a specific historical and cultural moment. To practice theology in Africa would necessarily have to mean that the resultant theory should be authentic and rooted in the histories, experiences and cultural landscapes of Africa. This does not mean, however, that the rootedness in a particular culture or environment should have the final say in matters of faith and ethics. Reformed theologians have insisted on the primacy of the gospel or the specific Christian nature of this tradition throughout the ages. The life and teaching of Jesus transcend any attempt at cultural exclusivism. Ingrained into the Reformed tradition is its inherently critical stance towards the cultural form of any expression of the Christian articles of faith or morals. This second dimension means that the ideologies and systems of thinking in which both Western and African moral theory are embedded should be made available for critical engagement.

A third dimension of the Reformed tradition is its collaborative thrust. Despite some examples to the contrary, notably in SA, this is expressed by the Reformed interest in ecumenism. It is also expressed by the Reformed interest in working together with actors in sectors other than those in the religious sector (see Fourie 2012b, 2012c for attempts at operationalising this collaborative thrust). For South African Reformed theologians, this means that the pluralism of the South African society should form the basis for public engagement (see Fourie 2011b).

The above-mentioned elements of the Reformed tradition is leading Fourie to deepened reflection on an adequate understanding of foundational ethical concepts. At least two are worth highlighting, namely 'Africa' and 'morality'. With regard to the former, Fourie reflects on the extent to which 'Africa' is useful to describe the context in which we seek to concretise the Christian faith in SA. 'Africa', when used as a geographic designation, seems to refer to a complex collection of people and groups, speaking literally thousands of languages, adhering to numerous religious traditions, straddling a spectrum of socio-economic positions and calling vastly different cities and towns home. Is there any sense in which 'Africa' is a useful term without legitimating those who seek to reduce the people and groups of the continent to a few clichés? A similarly complex set of questions can be asked about the concept of 'morality'. Is morality a Western concept, or is it possible to define morality in ways that includes non-Western socio-cultural resources? Is it possible to distinguish between the phenomenon of morality as such and the content of specific moralities? Is it possible to incorporate sources of knowledge that have their origins in radically different contexts into a coherent and constructive concept of morality?

Fourie concludes, albeit in a preliminary fashion, that a reflection on the internal coherence and usefulness of the concept 'Africa' forms a useful starting point for such a project (see Fourie 2015). It is possible to argue that external actors invented 'Africa' (and he uses 'invention' in a less sophisticated

manner than, for example, Mudimbe 1988, 1994) in order to name their political and economic ambitions. This usage started with the expansion of the Roman Empire and was entrenched by the colonial enterprise. According to Fourie, 'Africa' only relatively recently became the self-description of people and groups who live on what is now the continent of Africa. He interprets the uses of 'Africa' in the 1900s as the reclamation of the subjectivity of 'Africans' in which 'Africa' at times functions as designation for a 'representative ideal'. According to Fourie, 'Africa' is useful to describe the context in which he seeks to develop moral theory. In its most restrictive sense, it seems to designate a place, which coincides to a large extent with what is called the continent of Africa, in which many people and groups actively attempt to reclaim their subjectivity. After centuries of denigration and suppression and also of the uncritical imposition of institutions and ideas developed elsewhere, Africa seems to designate a place characterised by the reclamation of socio-cultural resources with their origin in this 'place'.

Reflection on the internal coherence of the concept of 'Africa' enables reflection on avenues for finding ways in which to use the concept 'morality' that do not contradict the very project of developing moral theory in 'Africa'. This is leading Fourie to the inclusion of meta-ethical elements in his project. At the risk of generalising too much, he seeks to reflect on the descriptive elements of moral theory rather than focussing only on the normative or prescriptive elements. In this regard, he draws on the seminal work done by John Searle (1995) and Raimo Tuomela (2007). This is motivated by the fact that the descriptive endeavour already has normative overtones. An agenda-setting collection of texts that appeared as early as 1970 is illustrative in this regard. The 'psychological' or 'autonomous' definitions of morality proposed by Whiteley (1970:21–25) and Cooper (1970:72–90) resemble what can be described as specific normative approaches to morality (also cf. Wallace & Walker 1970). In terms of Fourie's project, however, it is important to note that the notion of a social, or as he would term it 'descriptive',

approach to morality – also identified by Whiteley and Cooper – is not absent among moral theorists in the 20th century. The major challenge with many normative approaches to morality is that they often unwittingly conflate the phenomenon and the content of morality as the content of specific moralities is used to define the phenomenon of morality. This is visible in the works of many leading lights in the Western tradition, including Immanuel Kant (2002:57), David Hume (1896:160, 455–476) and later John Stuart Mill (1963:207).

Fourie is currently working on the provisional assumption that it is indeed possible to use the concept 'morality' and to develop 'moral' 'theory' in 'Africa' in ways that do not contradict such an endeavour. Its usefulness is dependent on strict provisions and to some extent, corrections of the conventional approach to morality in much of Africa. He argues that normative approaches to morality – approaches that use the content of specific moralities to define the concept of morality – could fruitfully be complemented by a more descriptive approach (see Fourie 2016).

■ Van Wyk: On ecclesiological challenges and political theology

Tanya Van Wyk is an ordained minister of the Netherdutch Reformed Church (NRC). She was appointed as part-time teaching assistant to the Dean of the Faculty, Johan Buitendag, in 2010 and as Senior Lecturer in the Department in 2014. She completed her dissertation, 'Church as heterotopian space: A Trinitarian-ecclesiological model for the third millennium', in 2013. The study focusses on the challenge of being church in the post-secular 21st century (cf. Van Wyk 2012; 2013a; 2014). This is part of her ongoing main research theme, namely 'reconciling diversity'. Van Wyk's initial research within this theme focussed on ecclesial 'unity' and 'catholicity' and issues of race, gender and sexuality (cf. Van Wyk & Buitendag 2008, 2010). She argued that a revisited theological anthropology is a necessary step on the church's journey towards reconciling diversity (inclusivity) with

special reference to the NRC's historical justification of separate ethnic-based churches and the ongoing debates regarding the understanding of homosexuality (Van Wyk & Buitendag 2011a, 2011b). Another main part of her doctoral work was research on the life and work of Edward Schillebeeckx and Jürgen Moltmann – specifically the manner in which their respective theologies connected church and world. From their different denominational contexts, they crossed theological and geographical barriers and reconciled diversity. This is evidenced by Schillebeeckx's argument for replacing *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the church no salvation) with *extra mundum nulla salus* (literally: outside the world no salvation) (cf. Boeve 2010; Schillebeeckx 1982; Van Wyk 2013b). Moltmann's political theology (Moltmann 2013) crosses church, national and paradigm barriers, from Germany to the USA and South America (Van Wyk 2015). The importance of political theology for the South African context cannot be understated. In Van Wyk's current research, building on the research done so far, the main focus therefore is Political Theology.

Her project for the next three years is grouped under the title 'Postmodern space and reconciling diversity: The church as heterotopia and the South African democratic ideal'. Part of her doctoral study had already focussed on the manner in which the great revolutions in North America and France were the breeding ground for concepts such as 'nation' and 'nationalism' and how 'unity' was interpreted in terms of the dominant ideology of nationalism and nation. In Germany, the ideology of National Socialism compromised the integrity of the church. In SA, apartheid had a similar effect. In 2015, SA celebrated 21 years of democracy. Twenty one years after the first democratic elections in 1994, overcoming the heritage of a binary paradigm is the challenge facing democracy in SA. This binary thinking entails the revival of nationalism versus the utopia of one nation as well as the relationship between particularity and universality, individuality and pluriformity, and unity and diversity. A similar amount of time (in this case 26 years) has elapsed since the fall of the Berlin wall. The events that set in motion the unification of

Germany have parallels with those that precipitate South African reconciliation. Germany and other countries of the European Union are to this day struggling with the relationship (or tension) between a particular national identity and the ideal of a unified Europe. Different nations in the European Union are currently experiencing a serious migrant crisis. The migrant issue often gives rise to a revival of nationalism. Concerns in the European Union are in ways similar to the binary paradigm that faces SA. In post-1989 Europe, philosopher Jürgen Habermas is of the opinion that unity could only be functional if particular nationalities were maintained. He coined the term 'commitology' to indicate an epistemology that entails an explicit commitment to unity as well as to particularity (diversity). In secular Europe and postcolonial globalisation, both religion and nationalism can present obstacles to a commitment towards reconciling diversity. Habermas also uses the term 'postnational constellation' to describe the result of a commitment to both particular nationalities and globalisation (Habermas 2001, 2013).

The negative attitude towards religion and nationalism has a history in both the secular European and postcolonial globalised contexts. In Europe, religio-political monarchical entities perpetuated exploitation, colonialism and intolerance. National Socialism degenerated into a hegemony which led to world wars. In SA, Christian nationalism contributed to the apartheid ideology. Though SA cannot be equated with secularised Europe, theologically speaking, the relationship between a nation-state ideology and religion that affected both contexts cannot be denied. From a postcolonial perspective, SA is the product of both contexts, namely Europe and Africa. The challenge of overcoming the binary paradigm that is facing the South African democratic ideal is one of reconciling diversity and the political dimensions of reconciliation.

These contours constitute the current focus of Van Wyk's setting of her systematic-theological study about reconciling diversity. The contours demonstrate the complex relationship between political ideologies and religion. The contribution of her research is to develop a model in the field of political theology

according to which differences do not cease to be but can cooperate in a reconciling manner. Her research is driven by five key aspects, namely critical theology, theology of justice and a humane society, prophetic theology, public theology critical of policy and theology of concrete change (cf. Van Wyk 2015).

■ Where do we speak to?

From the above, it is clear that each member of the Department gives concrete expression to the question of Ricoeur, namely, *Where do we speak from?* It is indeed a question that is explicitly taken seriously in order to speak from our specific contexts as white and black Reformed theologians at a public university in the 21st century to the contexts of our concrete existence in a post-apartheid SA, acknowledging the historical-contextual character of all of our understandings of our life worlds. This could entail approaching being human from an eco-hermeneutical viewpoint or formulating more clearly from a strongly infused political and gender awareness our theological understandings of being church in the spaces in which we find ourselves. It could be to explicate as embodied persons our deepened and stronger integrated understandings of personhood from and within the theology-science dialogues or within liberation-theological discourses and contexts or to explore and express as Africans, in reclaiming African intellectual subjectivity, our making moral sense of the world in which we live. These themes represent the very diverse although related current research contribution and pursuits of our Department – also for the years to come. It is a diverse research contribution and pursuit in search of ultimate contextual relevancy. It searches for relevance, which will incessantly have to be guided in future by the spirit of the initial question that was taken as vantage point, namely *Where do we speak from?* It implies for the future as 'speaking to' that the members of the Department are to continue to reflect self-critically with others by asking how contextual our faith reflections are after all for being persons of and in Africa. We need to ask about the nature

of the knowledge that we perceive ourselves to share with one another, about ways in which our knowledge is still permeated and determined by our own (political-social) preferences and positions of power. We need to ask whether the 'others' are really welcome(d) in our understandings. Ultimately, we need to ask about the difference that it makes to our being persons of faith (and churches) in a relationship with God, people who want to make a concrete difference and change the world for the better for everybody. All of these questions (and even more questions that will certainly come up) will be embedded as an ongoing task, as taking responsibility for and being accountable in talking about God, about being human, about liberating faith and about being moral persons in the 21st century at a public university in Pretoria, SA.

■ Summary: Chapter 4

How can an academic voice concerning systematic-theological reflection find expression at a public university in a post-apartheid SA? In this chapter, the different research foci of the members of the Department of Dogmatics and Christian Ethics at the UP are presented and interpreted as attempts to find such a voice as a collection of voices within a society characterised by shifting social-ecclesial and theological landscapes. The specific research foci, namely eco-hermeneutics; evolutionary perspectives on religious experience; an ethic of sociality within postcolonial, pluralist and unequal societies; and ecclesiological challenges and political theology are structured and presented in terms of the hermeneutical question that was posed by Ricoeur, namely *D'où parlez-vous?* [Where do you speak from?]. Against the background of the vision, objectives and values of the Department, the main objectives of their respective approaches as explication of the 'speaking from' and 'speaking to' are outlined. Some of the most important contemporary issues are identified in a conclusion that are, according to them, to be addressed within the Southern African contexts.

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Chapter 1

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