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Psalm 72 in light of the psychological theories of poverty

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Prior to the 1980s, various theories of poverty have been proposed by psychologists, ranging from, but not limited to, 'naturalizing perspective', 'constitutionally inferior perspective', or 'nativist perspective'; to the 'McClelland approach' (McClelland 1961, 1965, 1973); to the 'attribution theory'; and to Lewis' (1975) culture of poverty theory. The theories tease out issues of the accumulated environmental deficits and psychiatric disorders, such as depression as well as the lack of ambition and mental drive to achieve success. However, from the 1980s, psychologists returned to the Lewis' culture of poverty theory. The World Bank Development Report for 2000–2001's expansion of Sen's (1999) theory, which placed emphasis and/as three-pillars on 'security', 'empowerment' and 'opportunity' led for one, among other psychological bodies, the American Psychological Association to consider various conceptualisation of the theories of poverty. The paper tests the psychological theories of poverty against the background of the historical-literary read poetic text of Psalm 72. Does a poetic reading of Psalm 72 bear a psychological meaning when read within the framework of psychological theories of poverty? Firstly, the paper investigates psychological theories of poverty prior to 1980s to the present. Secondly, in a poetically and historically read Psalm 72, the psychological presuppositions are teased out. In the end, the paper submits with caution that when read within the framework of psychological theories of poverty, the poetically read Psalm 72 produces psychological meaning, which contributes value to the reading of Biblical poetic texts.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: The article draws on the discipline of psychology, employing the psychology theories of poverty to read an Old Testament poetic text of Psalm 72. The meaning of Psalm 72 is derived from the psychological reading of the historical-literary critically analysed poetic Hebrew Bible text.

Keywords: psychological theories of poverty; Psalm 72; historical-literary analysis; biblical poetry.

Introduction

The psychological reading of the biblical text complements approaches that consider texts and their impact from the perspective of the reader, alongside literary, historical and theological approaches. Psychological criticism navigates how texts operate within the minds of their readers and portrays thoughts, issues affecting the readers and motivations of the ideas and themes. The psychological approach to biblical texts identifies and employs a specific psychological theory to tease out issues in the texts that bear psychological meaning for the original and contemporary readers.

The present article investigates the issue of poverty in Psalm 72 by historically and literary reading the psalm. However, to derive at a psychological meaning of historical-literary read Psalm 72, the essay draws on the psychological theories of poverty. Theories ranging from the 'naturalizing perspective', 'constitutionally inferior perspective' or 'nativist perspective'; to the 'McClelland approach' (McClelland 1961, 1965, 1973); to the 'attribution theory'; and to Lewis' (1975) culture of poverty theory as well as The World Bank Development Report for 2000–2001's expanded thoughts on Sen's (1999) theory, are considered.

The researcher has in mind, the contexts of humans as may be reflected in the psychological reading of Psalm 72. Although the text is a royal psalm, it also reflects the plight of the poor. As Davage (2021:357) argues, the point that verses 1 and 20 of Psalm 72 frame the psalm, cast it as David's prayer for Solomon. Based on the heading of the psalms (v. 1a), Psalm 72 is presented as the prayer for guidance and support of King Solomon and other kings. It may be likely that the psalm was composed at a period later than the reign of King Solomon. However, its content partly

points to the socio-economic, political and religious contexts of the period of Solomon. For example, Westermann (1977:190) is convinced that Psalms 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 89, 101, 110, 132 and 144 reflect in a certain sense the actualisation of history ('Vergegenwärtigung von Geschichte'). The form and style correspond with ancient near eastern royal inscriptions (Seybold 1996:277). Because it mirrors a court style (see Gressmann 1929:15–19; Prinsloo 1999:550, footnote 15; Van der Ploeg 1973:427; Van Uchelen 1977:227), it was probably composed by a court poet or cultic prophet for an official royal court event (Human 2002:659). Because the psalm also mentions poverty, it may be worthwhile to investigate the issue of poverty and its impact deliberately to poor. The meaning of the psalm to its original readers necessitates more nuances in the scholarship of psalms that might be provided by a psychological reading of the text.

The article imagines that a historically and literary read psalm (Ps 72) may be brought to bear with psychological theories of poverty to test whether the psychological issues of accumulated environmental deficits and psychiatric disorders, such as depression as well as the lack of ambition and mental drive to achieve success may be teased out in the texts of Psalm 72. In addition, the issues of 'security', 'empowerment' and 'opportunity', which led the psychological bodies, the American Psychological Association to consider conceptualisations of the theories of poverty are investigated in Psalm 72. It is cardinal that the present study also shows areas and issues of inconsistency between the psychological theories of poverty and Psalm 72.

Firstly, the article investigates psychological theories of poverty. Secondly, in a poetically, historically read Psalm 72, the study draws to light the psychological presuppositions in the psalm. In the end, the article produces with caution a psychological meaning of a historically and literary read Psalm 72 for its original, later and contemporary readers of the text.

Psychological theories of poverty

Psychological theories of poverty are a production of studies in theories of poverty emerging from the field of psychology. The interest of the theories of poverty lies in the causes and impact of poverty within the discipline of psychology which move beyond the individualistic pathological explanations to the consideration of the structural and societal factors that contribute to poverty (Turner & Lehning 2007:57–72). Thus, from the 1980s, the focus was on the social, political and economic factors that contribute to the creation and maintenance of poverty.

Remarks on the theories of causation of poverty as well as the theories on the impacts of poverty in the discipline of psychology prior to the 1980s are in order.

Turner and Lehning (2007:59) contend that, 'one theory, known variously as the 'naturalizing perspective', 'constitutionally inferior perspective' or 'nativist perspective' is supported by psychologist-designed intelligence tests. For example, intelligence quotient (IQ) tests suggest that biological factors result in poverty (cf. Ginsburg 1978:178–197; Pearl 1970:348–364; Rainwater 1970:9–28). The functionality of the brain impacts the human behaviour on issues relating to poverty. Mental health, ideologies and philosophies of humans influence the conceptualisation of poverty as well as the response to the plight of the poor. The validity of an intelligence test is questionable. Although the IQ tests provide quantifiable evidence to support the naturalising perspective, for Pearl (1970:9–28) the intelligence (mental functionality) is far from being a measurable construct. Thus, the theory is inconclusive in addressing the issue of poverty (Turner & Lehning 2007:59). In relation to the 'naturalizing perspective' and 'constitutionally inferior perspective' is a theory that involves the place of 'language development and the accumulated environmental deficits that can lead to poor academic achievement and the continuation of the cycle of poverty' (Turner & Lehning 2007:59; cf. Ginsburg 1978:178–197; Pearl 1970:9–28). Because of the inadequate development of the language skills, children who are poor as compared to their middle-class and wealthy counterparts have cognitive deficiencies, such as lack of sound judgement, memory, perception, reasoning, among other issues (Ginsburg 1978:178–197; Pearl 1970:9–28). Thus, 'individual deficiencies contribute to an individual's inferior social and economic status' (Turner & Lehning 2007:59). A human with cognitive deficiencies may therefore contribute to poverty and bear limitations in their abilities of addressing poverty. However, the view on language deficiencies seems to bear class-based arrogance as it lacks substantial differentiation of class-based language abilities (Ginsburg 1978:178–197; Pearl 1970:9–28). Departing from the theories on 'language development and the accumulated environmental deficits', Ginsburg (1978:178–197) proposed a developmental view. He hypothesises that although there may be class differences in cognition, the poor and middle-class people and children share cognitive potentials and similar modes of language. Although plausible in some level, the idea of individual deficiencies is far from providing conclusive psychological explanation of poverty, as other factors may be considered in the discourse of poverty.

As noted by Carr (2003:1–15), the so-called 'McClelland approach' (McClelland 1961, 1965:321–333, 1973:1–14) enjoyed the attention of psychological theorists in the 1960s and the 1970s. This approach and/or theory viewed the poor as lacking a psychological trait, called 'Need for Achievement (NAch)', which therefore prevents them from escaping the cycle of poverty (Carr 2003:1–15; Turner & Lehning 2007:59–60). The theory insists that the lack of ambition and mental drive to achieve success explains the existentiality of poverty because people do not work hard for economic success. The theory is ignorant to the external factors such as job creation and unequal job opportunities in the inequal society that contribute to poverty. The McClelland approach also suggests that 'psychologizing poverty was liable to pathologize the poor rather than the

system that constrained them' (Carr 2003:5). Thus, the poor are blamed for their poverty and not only viewed as abnormal, but as also less human than the wealthy. Furthermore, the 'attribution theory' promised the explanation of poverty (Carr 2003:1–15; Turner & Lehning 2007:59–60). The theory suggests that internal factors such as individualistic mental limitations are attributed to poverty, while external and uncontrollable factors that include societal problems may be attributed to economic success (Carr 2003:1–15). Taking cue from the idea of external factors, in his culture of poverty theory, Lewis (1975) points to the role of the social environment in producing a culture of poverty and claims that the poor suffer from factors such as, family tension and a lack of refined emotions (cf. Carr 2003:1–15) However, these explanations fail to address poverty. The 'attribution theory' by and large blames the poor people's lack of self-esteem for their plight of poverty. Thus, the theory contains limitations in convulsively explaining poverty.

Interestingly, a psychological theorist Rainwater (1970:9–28) conceptualised poverty as a manifestation of moral deficiencies, while others viewed poverty as a psychological sickness and/as disturbance (see also Goldstein 1973). The conceptualisation deemed the poor as needing healing. Thus, 'a number of studies reveal a high concentration of schizophrenia and other psychopathologies among the poor' (Turner & Lehning 2007:60). Mental illnesses therefore determine one's economic position (Goldstein 1973; Murali & Oyebode 2004:216–224; Turner & Lehning 2007:60). As Turner and Lehning (2007:61) observed, 'many studies have shown that psychiatric disorders, such as depression, alcoholism, anti-social personality disorder and schizophrenia, are more common in urban, poverty-stricken neighbourhoods than in more affluent communities' (cf. Murali & Oyebode 2004:216–224). However, on the other hand, it is argued that people's economic situation such as poverty causes psychopathologies, rather than the other way around (Goldstein 1973; Murali & Oyebode 2004:216–224). Said differently, the situation of poverty results to mental illness. The preceding view 'places part of the blame for the plight of the poor on society (i.e., not providing sufficient opportunities for achievement)' (Turner & Lehning 2007:62). Contrary to pointing the blame on the society, Goldstein (1973:66) posits that individuals play a role in their own psychopathology. For him an individual is accountable for personal development, socialisation and coping mechanism with stresses of the society stricken by poverty (Goldstein 1973:66). However, recently the American Psychological Association (APA 2000:2) stated that 'perceptions of the poor and of welfare – by those not in those circumstances – tend to reflect attitudes and stereotypes that attribute poverty to personal failings rather than socioeconomic structures and systems'. In addition, as contended by APA (2000):

> [*P*]overty is detrimental to psychological well-being, with [National Institute of Mental Health] data indicating that low-income individuals are 2–5 times more likely to suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder than those of the highest socio-economic-status group. (p. 1)

Therefore, while poverty contributes to mental illness, psychologists attribute mental illnesses to wider societal issues as well as intrinsic, personal characteristics of individuals.

From the 1980s, psychologists returned to the Lewis' (1975) culture of poverty theory that proposed that civilisation itself creates two cultures, namely, one of wealth and one of poverty (cf. Carr 2003:1–15; Turner & Lehning 2007:63–64). The implication, therefore, is that the psychological theories of poverty need to consider sociological, economic and political factors in society, which contribute to poverty and explain the plight of the poor. Some psychologists recently adopted Sen's (1999) proposal of 'Empowerment theory', which highlighted three issues: (1) political, economic and social freedom, (2) security and protection, and (3) transparent governmental activities (Carr 2003:1–15; Moreira 2003:69–86). Noteworthy is the World Bank Development Report for 2000–2001's expansion of Sen's theory, which placed emphasis on three pillars specifically: 'security', 'empowerment', and 'opportunity' (World Bank 2001). The World Bank's concept of 'security' includes factors such as clean water, adequate food and housing, and the reduction of vulnerability to natural disasters (World Bank 2001). The concept of 'empowerment,' similar to Sen's definition, entails providing the poor with the means to acquire a greater voice to help them fight for justice within their society (World Bank 2001). When applied to psychological treatment, 'empowerment' encourages psychologists to work 'with' the poor, not 'for' them (Austin 2007; Carr 2003:1–15; World Bank 2001). Of course, a society in which only a portion of its citizens (i.e. poor people) lacks empowerment implies that discrimination and prejudice are at the root of the problem (Carr 2003:1–15). Finally, the World Bank's third concept is 'opportunity'. Poverty exists, in part, because the poor are deprived of opportunities to participate independently in the global economy (World Bank 2001). Such opportunities range from lack of an affordable education to a dearth of living-wage, entry-level jobs (World Bank 2001). The World Bank's three-pillar view of poverty seems to be a comprehensive theory from which psychologists can proceed with both research and interventions (Austin 2007). The psychological conceptualisation of poverty therefore considers 'security', 'empowerment' and 'opportunity'. However, most importantly, Lott (2002:100–110) includes the 'theory of classism', which for her teases out how the wealthy people distance themselves mentally (in terms of thought processing), emotionally and physically from the poor. In addition, for her 'barriers erected by classist bias maintain inequities and impede access to the resources necessary for optimal health and welfare' (Lott 2002:100). In the 'theory of classism', the wealthy persons also consider the poor as less moral and thus positing in the minds of the upper-class people that poverty is caused by the lower class, thus rendering the plight justifiable and acceptable. Additionally, classism also bears an element of dehumanisation of the poor people (Lott 2002:102). As such, the poor people often view

themselves as less human and in turn devalue themselves. Thus, the poor question their identity.

Psychologists align the psychological theories to the conceptualisation of social justice (Louis et al. 2014:14–27; Thrift & Sugarman 2019:1–17). The social justice issues such as income inequality (Desilver 2013); employment security (Walkerdine & Bansel 2010); anxiety and depression (Henderson & Zimbardo 2008) and homelessness (Hwang 2010; Murray 2016) bear psychological implications and consequences (Thrift & Sugarman 2019:4). Forms of inequality and poverty may be considered as 'an egregious form of injustice that was at least partly the fault of social and political structures', rather than as being 'an outcome of sin, bad character or bad choices and mental health' (Jackson 2005:356–373; Paine 1999:15–16; Thrift & Sugarman 2019:5). The place of social justice in psychology therefore diverts the focus on attributing poverty to the issues of mental health and lack of self-regulation, self-efficacy or self-esteem of individuals. Social justice in psychology addresses 'oppressive and exploitative transgressions' perpetrated by social, economic and political structures as well as organisations (Thrift & Sugarman 2019:12; cf. Louis et al. 2014:22). Thus, the interconnectedness between psychology and social justice highlights the relation between the discourses on justice, social change, ethical (righteous) behaviour and humanitarianism. Social justice and psychology evince relations with peace psychology, a theory that connects the discourse on peace and psychology. Psychological theories of poverty offer a contribution to conceptualising the plight of the poor. The conceptualisation considers individualist mental and behaviour issues as well as external factors that include economic, political and sociological issues among societies. It is against the background of the psychological theories of poverty that Psalm 72 is analysed to conceptualise poverty.

Historical-literary analysis of Psalm 72

The allusions on poverty, children in need, oppression and the contribution of the society on the identity of the poor as well as the socio-economic, political and psychological presuppositions provide an explanation of poverty in Psalm 72. The meaning of Psalm 72 is derived from the consideration of the grammatical and stylistic features of the Psalm as well as from the navigation of the location of the Psalm in its historical context(s). However, it is necessary to first offer some brief remarks on the structure of the psalm. Kselman (1975:77), among other scholars, proposed a contested structure of Psalm 72: Strophe 1 (vv. 1–4); Strophe 2 (vv. 5–8); Strophe 3 (vv. 9–11); Strophe 4 (12–15); and Strophe 5 (16–17). Drawing on Zenger (1993:65) and Saur (2004:133), Davage (2021:359) proposes a slightly different structure: Strophe 1 (vv. 1–4); Strophe 2 (vv. 5–8); Strophe 3 (vv. 9–11); Strophe 4 (vv. 12–14); and Strophe 5 (vv. 15–17), as he observed the placement of verse 8. Some scholars emphasising on thematic similarities regard the Psalm as belonging (as an introduction) to the concentrically arranged (vv. 9–11) (see Becker 2008:125; Diller 2010:19; Human 2002:666; Janowski 2002:106–109; Meinhold 2004:86–88; Salo 2017:209–215; Zenger 1993:66). However, other scholars emphasising on syntax place it together with verses 2–7 (see Auffret 1996; Barbiero 2007:75; Human 2002). On a thematic account, verses 1–4 address the issue of poverty and justice for the poor, while verses 5–7 present the subject of the reign of the king and fertility. Because of the reference to 'dominion' in verse 8, it makes sense to pair the verse with the verses 9–11 that address the political reign of the king. Hence, the view that verse 8 belongs with verses 9–11 functioning as an introduction is more plausible. Furthermore, verses 12–14 deal with the issue of poverty as well as justice and deliverance of the poor, while verses 15–17 are concerned about the reign of the king and fertility. In agreement with Hossfeld and Zenger (2002:412), Human (2002:667) identifies 'an analogous pattern between 2 and 4 (social justice – A) and 5–7 (cosmos and fertility in nature – B) and 12–14 (social justice – A') with 15–17 (cosmos and fertility in nature – B')' (see also Davage 2021:359). Because of the allusion to justice and righteousness in verse 1, it makes sense to attach the verse to verses 2–4 and view it as an introduction of strophe 1. At the centre of the analogous pattern are verses 8–11 (political reign), which may be labelled as (C) to produce a 'concentric pattern (A-B-C-A'-B')' (Human 2002:667; cf. Davage 2021:359). Considering the thematic contents of the psalm, over and above the syntax emphasises the latter pattern is plausible. Psalm 72 also comprises the heading (v. 1a), doxologies (vv. 18–19) and colophon (v. 20).[1]

Grammatical and stylistic features of the Psalm on poverty

As Human (2002:665) observed the stylistic features of Psalm 72, 'despite concentric patterns in its micro and macro structures, the text reflects style figures like repetition (*mišpat* vv. 1, 2, 4; *am* vv.[2] 2, 3, 4; *erets* vv. 6, 8, 19; *šemeš* v. 5, 17 etc.), *ellipsis* (vv. 2, 3, 6, 7), *contrast* (v. 4), *pars pro toto* or *synecdoche* (v. 3), *chiasm* (vv. 9, 11, 15b), *rhyme* (vv. 9–11), *merismus* (vv. 9–10), *hyperbole* (v. 5), *comparison* (v. 16) and others' (cf. Van der Lugt 1980:309–310; Prinsloo 1999:536–554). As aforementioned, strophe 1 addresses the problem of justice and poverty of the poor. The nouns 'justice' and 'righteousness' in verse 1, which are repeated in verse 2 and with 'righteousness' further repeated in verse 3 render the verse as introduction to stanza 1 (vv. 1–4). The repetition of words serves as a stylistic feature to emphasis the theme of justice, peace and righteousness in the psalm. Verse 2 reads that, יָדִין עַמְּךָ בְצֶדֶק וַעֲנִיֶּיךָ בְמִשְׁפָּט (He will judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice). The preposition that is attached to a noun, which is in a masculine singular form בְצֶדֶק that may be translated as 'with righteousness' can also be rendered as 'with equity'. The point that עַמְּךָ (your people) will be 'judged' with righteousness presupposes a situation caricatured with unrighteousness at the time of the composition statement יָדִין עַמְּךָ בְצֶדֶק [He will judge your

1.For the discussion on the compositional growth of Psalm 72 and its implications in the discourse of variant historical settings as well as the function of the psalm in such settings, see Human (2002:658–677).

2.Author's own insertion.

people with righteousness]. The conjunctive וְ [and] that is attached to the construct plural adjective with a suffix ךָ 'your' to form וַעֲנִיֶּיךָ [and your poor][3] makes the statement וַעֲנִיֶּיךָ בְמִשְׁפָּט [and your poor with justice] dependent on preceding statement [יָדִין עַמְּךָ בְצֶדֶק]. The poor are likely those who were materially poor and in need of socio-economic justice (Scheffler 2015:4). Verse 2 also presupposes a situation where at the time of the composition and redaction of the core of Psalm 72 (vv. 1–17), the poor were of existence and experienced injustice. Furthermore, in verse 3 the psalmist states, וּגְבָעוֹת בִּצְדָקָה הָרִים יִשְׂאוּ שָׁלוֹם לָעָם [{*m*}ay the mountains bring peace to the people and the hills {*bring*}righteousness]. The psalms imagine that both the peace and righteousness will be ushered to the people [לָעָם]. The allusion to the people connects verse 3 to verse 4. Not only does the latter verse present the prayer for the liberation of the poor and the end of their oppression, but it also desires justice to be done to the cause of the poor. Verse 4 reads that, יָבִיאוֹן וְיַדַּכֵּא עוֹשֵׁק יִשְׁפֹּט עֲנִיֵּי־עָם יוֹשִׁיעַ לִבְנֵי. [{*m*}ay he[4] judge {*do justice to or defend the cause of*} the poor of the people, {*and*} save the children of the needy and may he crush the oppressor). Not only does the phrase עֲנִיֵּי־עָם [poor of the people] suggest the existentiality of the poor and poverty among the people, but it also presupposes different categories and classes of people in the society stricken by poverty. The Hifil imperfect verb יוֹשִׁיעַ [may he save] that is in a third person masculine singular state may also be rendered as 'may he free' and/or as 'may he liberate' (cf. v. 4). The reference to the 'children of the needy' presumes a generational state of neediness and poverty. The pairing of the allusion to the 'oppressor' to the reference to the 'poor of the people' and 'children of the needy' as well as to the verbs 'judge or defend or do justice to', 'save' and 'crush' in a single verse (v. 4) presupposes that oppression caused the injustice and generational poverty that existed in a society with non-poor people. The poet employs the style of contrast of the Hifil verb יוֹשִׁיעַ [may he save] and Piel וְיַדַּכֵּא [and may he crush] to point out the existentiality of the oppressed people and the oppressors in the discourse of poverty as well as the need to dismantle oppression. Because the God of Psalm 72 dislikes violence (cf. v. 14) one may be hesitant to accept וְיַדַּכֵּא in its literal sense, but rather figurative. Stanza 2 (vv. 5–7) is concerned about the reign of the king and fertility. The stanza describes the 'blessed consequences of social justice' in cosmic terms (Human 2002:666). A just rule of the king in verse 5 bears prospect of a long life (cf. vv. 7, 15, 17; Ps 61:7–8; Dietrich 2012:156–160; Salo 2017:261–268). Verse 6 reads: כְּמָטָר יֵרֵד עַל־גֵּז כִּרְבִיבִים זַרְזִיף אָרֶץ [May he be like rain that falls on a mown field, like showers watering the earth]. The rain and the showers that are to nourish the גֵּז [mown grass] and water the earth point to the nourishment of the grazing and/or as pastorage lands as well as agricultural land. The pairing of the words 'righteousness' and 'peace' is repeated in verse 7 (cf. v. 3). As noted by Kselman (1975:79), the poet employs 'semantic-sonant chiasmus in vs. 7':

יִפְרַח־בְּיָמָיו צַדִּיק
וְרֹב שָׁלוֹם עַד־בְּלִי יָרֵחַ

As noticed in this chiasmus, the verse consists of the assonant pair יִפְרַח and יָרֵחַ as well as the pair of synonyms צַדִּיק and שָׁלוֹם (Kselman 1975:79) to highlight that both peace and righteousness (or justice) will eternally (till moon is no more) flourish (or extraordinary exist) when a just king rules. The just actions of the king in the political sphere are expected to produce peace and righteousness (vv. 5–7; Janowski 2002:116; Tate 1990:223; cf. Assmann 1992:54; Davage 2021:362). The peace, prosperity and righteousness that characterise the reign of the king, which is likened to 'the rain that falls on a mown field' (v. 6) is 'not an unexpected metaphor in a Davidic or messianic context, for it has already been used of the refreshing effects of the reign of a Davidic king in 2 Samuel (23:3b–4) (cf. Hs 6:3; Mi 5:7)' (Kaiser 2009:265).

As aforementioned, verse 8 introduces stanza 3 (vv. 8–11). The stanza alludes to the political influence of the king in power, which emanates from a just reign that bears socio-economic benefits. The conjunctive waw attached to the Qal verb which is connected to a conjunctive imperfect Jussive in a third person masculine singular form that is rendered as וְיֵרְדְּ [He will rule] may also be translated as 'he will subjugate' or 'he will have dominion'. The Qal imperfect verb יִכְרְעוּ [will bow] in verse 9 insinuates political submission. The inhabitants in the desert will be submissive to the king. The submission to the king is emphasised by the feature of parallelism and the style of rhyme in verses 8–11. The verbs יִכְרְעוּ [will bow] and וְיִשְׁתַּחֲווּ [will bow down] form a parallelism in verses 9 and 11. In addition, the rhyme of יָשִׁיבוּ [will bring] and יַקְרִיבוּ [will offer] in verse 10 creates a parallelism in verses 10a and 10b (Kselman 1975:79). The Piel imperfect verb יְלַחֵכוּ [will lick] suggests a state of being conquered or defeated. Verse 10 demonstrates the political influence and power of the kings by asserting that other kings 'will bring' [יָשִׁיבוּ] tributes [מִנְחָה] and gifts [אִשֻּׁכָּר]. Verse 11 further alludes to the universal political influence of the king. One can only imagine that the political relations with other nations ought to bring prosperity to the king, which would address the problem of poverty alluded to in verses 1–4. It is likely that some trade between nations is imagined in stanzas 8–11. Regarding the rule of the king, Kaiser (2009:266; cf. Van Groningen 1990:383) remarks:

> The reign of this righteous king would extend as we have seen thus far: (1) *geographically* from sea to sea, which is to say around the world; and (2) *militarily* over all enemies opposing his reign; but add to this also that this reign would extend (3) *economically*, as tribute and gifts were brought from all over the world (v. 10); and (4) *politically*, as all potentates will come under this righteous king's rule and serve him (v. 11).

3.The noun is often translated as 'your afflicted one'. However, the translation of the noun as 'your poor' is fitting. For the preference of the translation of the noun as 'your poor' see Davage (2021:360) and Scheffler (2015:3). Goldingay (2007:384) designates the people and the poor in verse 2 as God's and not the king's (cf. Davage 2021:361).

4.Taking some cue from Perowne (1966:567) who reasoned that against the rendition of verbs in Psalm 72 as future tenses in favour of view that verses 8, 15, 16, and 17 employ the apocopated, or jussive forms, which would indicate optatives, rather than future forms, Van Gemeren (2008:550) argues that the modal form 'may he' is the best rendering throughout the psalm (Van Gemeren 2008:550).

Like stanza 1 (vv. 1–4), stanza 4 (vv. 12–14) addresses the issue of poverty and social justice by shedding light on the plight of the poor. The Hifil imperfect verb יַצִּיל that is translated as 'he will deliver' (v. 12) may reasonably be rendered as 'he will free' or 'he will liberate'. Furthermore, the Piel verb מְשַׁוֵּעַ [who cries out] presupposes that the poor are in distress. Regarding the cry of homage, as Davage (2021:362) observed, verse 12 points 'to enthronement rituals as possible backgrounds for this cry' (see 1 Sm 10:24; 2 Sm 16:16; 1 Kg. 1:25, 31, 34, 39, featuring יחי without ו; cf. Hossfeld & Zenger 2005:216–217). Not only does the negative statement וְעָנִי וְאֵין־עֹזֵר [and the poor who have no helper – the helpless] in verse 12 point out that the poor were likely disliked but that they also had no 'aid', 'economic assistance' and 'economic security'. The singular construct adjective דַּל [the weak] in verse 13 may also be viewed as alluding to the physical and mental as well as the socio-economical state of lowliness and helplessness (see the translation of the Hebrew term by Scheffler 2015:3). Furthermore, the noun אֶבְיוֹנִים [of the oppressed] that is often translated as 'of the needy' (cf. Human 2002:664; Scheffler 2015:3) associates the situation of poverty and the state of weakness with 'oppression' (v. 13). In addition, the paired nouns, 'oppression' [מִתּוֹךְ] and 'violence' [מֵחָמָס] describe the situation and plight of the poor. Based on verses 12–14 it is reasonable to presuppose that there was likely socio-economic injustice which was accompanied with violent acts committed to the poor at the time of the production of the psalm. The poor lived alongside the rich persons, with the plight of the poor being highlighted by stanza 4. The point that the care for the life of the poor (vv. 2–4, 12–14) constitutes 'the basis for the king's dominion' (Tate 1990:224; also see Barbiero 2007:74; Davage 2021:361; Loretz 2002:171), renders the concerns for poverty in the socio-economic and political spheres key in Psalm 72. The poet imagines a period where the reign of a king will be characterised by political stability, peace and economic prosperity (Gonzaga & Furghestti 2021:316).

Verses 15–17 form stanza 5. The Conjunctive waw וְ [and] that is attached to the Hitpael verb וְיִתְפַּלֵּל [and may pray] shows a religious act, which accompanies 'justness' of the king, that brings economic blessings in the form of gold from Sheba (cf. 1 Ki 10:14–15, 22; Kaiser 2009:266). שְׁבָא [Sheba], a territory in southwest Arabia that is mentioned in verse 10 – a verse that reveals political international relations is repeated in verse 15 with a specific reference to an economic resource, namely gold. It is however unclear whether verse 15 presupposes trade of precious metals between the nations or the gold form part of tribute and gifts brought to the king as mentioned in verse 10. In addition, the issue of the recipient of the gold is contested. Hossfeld and Zenger (2005:203–204) argue that the poor are the recipients of the gold of Sheba. Against the argument, Davage (2021:362) noted that since the king is the recipient of gifts earlier in the psalm (v. 10; cf. Goldingay 2007:391; Tate 1990:224) he is likely the recipient of the gold in v. 15. The Piel imperfect verb יְבָרֲכֻהוּ [and may they bless him] in verse 15 alludes to a spiritual act of invoking the economic blessings of Elohim on behalf of the king.

The point that the masculine plural noun הָרִים that is translated as 'mountains' (v. 16) may also be rendered as 'hills' or 'hill countries' suggesting that the psalmist is alluding to fertility and economic prosperity in the hill countries of Southern Levant. The references to כַּלְּבָנוֹן [like Lebanon] – a wooded mountain range on the northern border of Israel in verse 16 and the mention of 'grain in the land', 'fruits' as well as 'grass of the land' alludes to fertility and/or as agricultural productivity (cf. Kaiser 2009:264). Verse 16 includes the 'people in the cities' in the fertility that is to be experienced in the Southern Levant during the reign of a just king. The cosmic language employed in verses 15–17 'depicts the fertility in nature, while the everlasting royal name advocates wealth and happiness' (Human 2002:667). The fertility metaphors are used to describe the king's rule (especially vv. 5–7), which as results in actual fertility (v. 16; cf. Davage 2021:362). As Kaiser (2009:265) notes, 'it is important to note how frequently the concepts of 'rain', 'growth' and 'fertility' are linked with concepts of 'right', 'righteousness' and 'justice' in the Scriptures' (cf. Ringgren 1956:17). Psalm (72:17) presupposes healthy international relations, where גּוֹיִם (the foreign nations) will be blessed (Davage 2021:362; cf. Gn 12:1–3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:3–4; 28:14; Kaiser 2009:267) as they pronounce happiness over the king. Worthy of note is the point that the sensical passive meaning of the Hithpael of *barak* 'will be blessed' is often read reflexively as all the nations 'will bless themselves' (Kaiser 2009:267).

Psalm 72 in its historical context(s) and poverty

Literary and textual observations of Psalm 72 point to possible different hand writings behind the composition of the psalm and therefore historical contexts. Worthy of note are relations and inconsistencies between the heading (v. 1a), doxologies (vv. 18–19) and colophon (v. 20); and the so-called *Grundschicht* and/or as *Primärfassung* (the core of the psalm: vv. 1b–7; 12–14; 16–17ab); as well as verses 8–11; 15; 17cd. Verse 1a, לִשְׁלֹמֹה [{*f*}or Solomon] and v. 20, כָּלּוּ תְפִלּוֹת דָּוִד בֶּן־יִשָׁי [{*a*}re ended the prayers of David's son of Jesse] indicate that Psalm 72 was neither written by Solomon and David by merely mentioning them. Thus, Human (2002:659) suggests that 'it was probably composed by a court poet or cultic prophet for an official royal court event'. In addition, the point that the psalm would make sense without the heading and the colophon lends credence to the idea that verses 1a and 20 were likely added to Psalm 72 at a later stage to associate the psalm with both the Davidic and Solomonic kingship ideologies (Davage 2021:364).

There are noticeable relations between verses 5 and 15. The Qal imperfect verb that is prefixed by a conjunctive waw וְ (and) to form וִיחִי [and he shall live] in verse 15 picks up the idea raised in verse 5 יִירָאוּךָ עִם־שָׁמֶשׁ [They shall fear you as long as the sun]. The statement is also and fittingly translated as 'May he live long before the sun' (Human 2002:663). It was not necessary for verse 15 to make a point already made in

verse 5 unless it was necessary for a different hand writer to later add the reference to the gold from Sheba and prayers that would be continually given to the king as homage.

Noteworthy, up until verse 17b, לְפָנֵי־שֶׁמֶשׁ יִנּוֹן שְׁמוֹ [as long as the sun will continue his name] the focus on the psalm has been on the king. The king will live long and be blessed. A change is noticeable in verse 17c where the poet asserts that apart from the king other people will be blessed through him and that nations will call the king blessed. Verse 17c of Psalm 72 reads, וְיִתְבָּרְכוּ בוֹ כָּל־גּוֹיִם יְאַשְּׁרוּהוּ [and men will be blessed in him, all nations will call him blessed]. The change presupposes a different handwriting at play in verse 17c likely at a stage later than the composition of verse 17b. The psalm could have ended in verse 17b and still make sense. Furthermore, unlike in the rest of the psalm, a blessing in the doxologies (vv. 18–19) is directed to a deity, thus indicating a different handwriting. In addition, worthy of note is the introductory statement of the doxologies in verse 18: בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים [Blessed be Yahweh Elohim]. The statement pairs יְהוָה [Yahweh] and אֱלֹהִים (Elohim) while verse 1b only mentions Elohim. This noticeable inconsistency indicates a different handwriting. It is therefore likely that the doxologies (vv. 18–19) were later inserted to further theologise the poem of Psalm 72. On the thematic point of view, a progression from verses 1–4 (concerns for poverty and justice for the poor) to verses 5–7 (description of the reign of the king and fertility) and further to verses 12–14 (future emphatic nuance on the issue of poverty as well as justice and deliverance of the poor) made sense. However, it was perhaps necessary for a later writer to interject the flow of psalm by including the political nuances of verses 7–11 to the socio-economic discourse on poverty and injustice of the psalm. The later placement of verses 8–11 at the centre of the analogous pattern (A-B-A′-B′) to form a concentric pattern (A-B-C [vv.8–11]-A′-B′) made sense (cf. Davage 2021:359; Human 2002:667).

Scholars explain the relations and inconsistencies in Psalm 72 by pointing to the literary growth of the psalm which comprises of the compositional, redactional and canonical processes and stages, which point to various contexts. It is argued that the core of Psalm 72 (vv. 1–17) can be dated to the pre-exilic period and that it would have fittingly been used liturgically, likely in connection with the enthronement of Davidic kings (Davage 2021:359; cf. Anderson 1972:518; Dahood 1968:179; Heim 1995:235; Janowski 2002:102; Goldingay 2007:381; Kaiser 2009:263; Mein 2012:98; Salo 2017:215–218; Saur 2004:135; Zenger 2002:66). Böhl and Gemser (1968:121) proposed an exilic date based on an idea that in the Babylonian exile the Israelites aspired to restore their kingdom under the Davidic king like Solomon. Some scholars argue for a post-exilic dating (Diller 2010:21–22; Gerstenberger 2001:67–68). Gerstenberger (2001:67–68) considers the psalm as a late post-exilic messianic poem which bears Aramaic influences, feasibility of royal figure and intercession for a Great Emperor as exemplified in Ezra (6:10) and Psalm (61:6–7) (cf. Human 2002:669). The late dating of the psalm is also supported by Van der Ploeg (1973:428) who regards the Aramaic influence in verses 4, 5, 6, 16 as an indication of the later date. Although a post-exilic date has been criticised (for a detailed critic, see Becker 2008:133–134; Janowski 2002:109–114; Loretz 2002:196–197), a post-exilic dating during the Second Temple period for the shaping and inclusion of the psalm in the compilations of psalms remains plausible (Davage 2021:359).

The *Primärfassung* (vv. 1b–7; 12–14; 16–17b) is dated to the 7th century BCE because of the argued influence of Ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian conceptions of kingship on the royal and/as kingship ideology of the psalm (Hossfeld & Zenger 2002:413). The 7th century date is also based on argument regarding the Neo-Assyrian and Egyptian Kingship ideology which is taken up and criticised in Psalm 72 (also see Gunkel 1933:160–164). As Scheffler (2015:5) opined, the 'view on kingship based on compassion for the weak (see v. 13) and on the king being a saviour is unique and different from views in Egypt and Mesopotamia where kingship was based on military power and the subjugation of the enemy' (cf. Houston 1999:342–364; Hossfeld & Zenger 2002:416). Since 'kingship was not invented by the Israelites' (Human 2002:660) and because the kingship ideology in the Royal Psalms bears parallels and inconsistency with the Neo-Assyrian and Egyptian kingship ideology it is reasonable to date the psalm to a period later than the composition of the Mesopotamian and Egyptian inscriptions. Human (2002:670) also points out that the original layer verses (1b–7, 12–14, 16–17b) presupposes anti-Assyrian tendencies, prophetic-social criticism of the 8th century BCE, hence a pre-exilic date is plausible. Furthermore, the layer 'emerges in direct dependence on the coronation hymn of Assurbanipal[5] and has a *literarische Vorbildfunktion* for Psalm 72 not without motivation' (Human 2002:672; cf. Arneth 2000:204). For Arneth (2000:204) Psalm 72 was originally composed shortly after the enthronement of Assurbanipal in 669 BCE. Additionally, 'in allusion to the middle-Assyrian royal rituals, a coronation hymn, which served as legitimisation for the king's reign, was dedicated to Assurbanipal' (Human 2002:670). The word pair of צֶדֶק [righteousness] and שָׁלוֹם [peace]' in verse 7 (cf. v. 3) as well as the themes of 'law and justice', 'continuous domination' and 'fertility' bear correspondences between Psalm 72 and the coronation hymn of Assurbanipal. In addition, both the texts allude to the king's receipt of gifts. The psalm drew on the coronation hymn of Assurbanipal and was later liturgically used as a coronation hymn of other kings.

Two possible settings for the liturgical use of Psalm 72 have been proposed. The psalm could have been used in the inauguration and/or as coronation ceremony of the king (Human 2002:672; cf. Gunkel 1926:305; Mays 1994:236; Tate 1990:222) or in 'an annual celebration of the king's enthronement at a harvest feast or on a New Year festival' (Human 2002:672; cf. Anderson 1972:518; Mowinckel 1962:93,96). More precisely, with reference to Isaiah (9:1–6)

5.For an English translation of the hymn, see Hallo and Younger (eds. 1997:473–474) as well as Human (2002:671).

and Jeremiah (22:15–17) Arneth (2000:204) suggests that the psalm functioned as a coronation hymn of king Josiah in 639 BCE, whose reign bear anti-Assyrian inclinations that were triggered by the foreign politics of the Assyrians. As Human (2002:672) asserts, the 'experiences like the fall of the Northern Kingdom, deportations under Shalmaneser V and Sargon II, the siege and conquest of Lachish, as well as the deportations of Sennacherib all constitute the situation of deprivation in the afflicted Israelite community, caused by the Assyrians'. Deprivation, oppression, violence, socio-economic injustices and poverty fit the setting presupposed in the psalm. The reference to oppression and violence in the psalm presupposes the context(s) proposed by Scheffler (2015:3). For him, 'like any war, the fall of Samaria in 721 BCE and Jerusalem in 586 BCE also caused poverty to increase, and many of the pronouncements on poverty in the Psalms can probably be interpreted within these contexts, addressing the situation' (Scheffler 2015:3). Verses 8–11; 15; 17a/b constitute the first revision of the psalm which was probably done in the exilic and early post-exilic periods through the insertion of political and socio-economic motives regarding the universal reign of the king (Arneth 2000:201-208 cf.). As asserted by Human (2002:670), 'a further single *Bearbeitung* of the text was the addition of verses (8–11, 15 and 17bc) to the original psalm in approximately 300 BCE'. In addition, a redactor who inserted the latter verses was also responsible for the doxology (vv. 18–19) and heading (v. 1a) of the psalm. Furthermore, around 300 BCE, through the insertion of the doxology and heading in the psalm was integrated in larger corpi or canonical units of the Psalter (cf. Arneth 2000:201–208; Hossfeld & Zenger 2002:413–416; Human 2002:673).

Concluding remarks

The main focus of the essay was to explore whether the psychological theories of poverty when casted in the context of the literary-historically read the poetic text of Psalm 72. The aim was to offer a contribution towards reconstruction of a psychological meaning of Psalm 72. As demonstrated in the conversation, the attribution theory is debateable. It was argued that problems of poverty vary. In some instances, it was shown that while the poor were themselves to blame, it was also established that poor people were viewed as the victims of other factors. Psychological issues of 'opportunity', less drive on the part of the poor to escape poverty, which necessitated the writing of Psalm 72 are key issues in the present study. The psychological theoretic diagnosis of the lack of opportunities as a contributing factor in the escalation of poverty in the psychological theories on poverty may be related to the situation behind Psalm 72. Based on the psychological as well as the historical-literary critical reading of Psalm 72, the paper contends that politics caricatured with ideals of social justice should constitute an attempt towards addressing socio-economic injustice, poverty and psychological effects that include mental illness, inferiority complex, deficits and behavioural patterns of the less privileged people in contemporary societies.

The issue of the children in need, the poor and the oppressors in Psalm 72:4 fits within the psychological theory of poverty. The persistency of poverty extends to the children, with the phenomenon of oppression being centric in the discourse. The issue of oppression in the psalm is placed alongside the concepts of peace, violence and the poor. The article offers a contribution to the psychological hermeneutics in biblical studies, investigating psychological theories on poverty against the background of Psalm 72, a text that is perceived as addressing the issue of poverty. Issues depicted in the psychological theory of poverty, such as poverty, oppression and children plagued by impoverishment tally with those addressed in the psalm, namely, the poor and justice in verse 2, peace to the people in verse 3 (this issue tallies with the depiction of a peaceful protest against injustices in the music video) and oppression in verse 14, as well as the reference to the needy to be saved in verses 13–14.

The needy are crying out in verse 12. The cry is coupled with the allusion to the poor who have no helper. The physical evidence of the effect of poverty bears psychological characteristics of depression, frustration and helplessness in the mind and heart point to the idea that a human being needs another human being for survival. Behind the situation of poverty in the psalm is the absence of the brotherly and sisterly love among the poor people themselves and other humans across various social-economic classes, who neglect the task of assisting each other to escape poverty.

The poor and/or the weak in verse 13 are linked to the idea of the needy that 'will be save', suggesting that at the time of the composition of the psalm they were not liberated and/as freed as well as saved. It does seem that the audiences of Psalm 72 were far from experiencing socio-economic liberation. Noteworthy, oppression and violence are placed along each other in Psalm 72. Interestingly, the psalmist does not resolve the problem of the absence of peace, oppression and poverty with violence. Instead, the psalm serves to address the latter issues.

In terms of further research, a contextual reading of Psalm 72 in South Africa may be possible when the psalm in conversation with the song 'Uhuru', which is composed by Sun-EL Musician[6] who featured Azana.[7] Popular music genre articulates various issues that affect societies, which induce 'physiological, movement, mood, emotional, cognitive and behavioural' responses on individuals (Osubo & Kebaya 2023:13). In addition, the popular song, 'Uhuru' presents the issue of poverty in South Africa that could be related, though not similar, to the situation of poverty casted in Psalm 72. The song, 'Uhuru' also addresses the predicament of black people. With that sense in the hindsight, it is fitting to further investigate the song in light of Steve Biko's philosophy which

6.Sanele Tresure Sithole (born 28 March 1988), known professionally as Sun-El Musician, is a South African disc jockey, music producer, and songwriter. Born and raised in Mooi River.

7.Makhosazana Masongo (born 13 September 2000) is a singer and songwriter best known as Azana. I also do not italicise words in indigenous languages, mainly because I do not clearly know why I must not italicise word in English language. All languages are important in writings, especially internationally.

is concerned about black pain and mentality to address various challenges faced by black people. A black philosophical reading of the song, 'uhuru' and Psalm 72 may be possible, with the psychological foregrounding at the centre of the debate. I therefore submit that in the historical context of Psalm 72, especially considering insights produced by the poetic devices as well as psychological theories on poverty, the texts present that a combination of sociology, politics and economics that may proffer a positive attempt at explaining poverty in the psalm.

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