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Theology and higher education: The place of a Faculty of Theology at a South African university

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In 2017, the Faculty of Theology celebrates its centenary at the University of Pretoria. Celebrating a centennial is as much as looking back as looking forward. In a changing world with changing paradigms how does one remain relevant? Different challenges and expectations presented to tertiary institutions of education in a new dispensation puts all concerned with higher education in South Africa under pressure. The question addressed in this article is how will a Faculty of Theology (in this case at the University of Pretoria) remain relevant to such an extent that it is continued to be viewed as desirable to have such a faculty present at a university, participating in the academic process and simultaneously continues to contribute to the well-being of the South African society. The author suggests the following guidelines for consideration. In order to remain relevant for the next couple of hundred years the Faculty of Theology should engage contextually with society, practise interdisciplinary Theology, engage in interreligious dialogue while still remaining connected to faith communities. A paradigm of post-foundationalism enables Theology to exercise Theology in a relevant and meaningful manner.

Introduction

When exploring the research done on higher education and in particular the position of theological training at a university, the amount of published literature on this matter is remarkable.[1] Compare for one the seminal work of Dietrich Werner *et al.* (ed.), 2010, *Handbook of theological education in world Christianity* as well as the historic work by De Ridder-Symoens (2003a, 2003b). The article by Werner (2010) was prepared as an overview of the achievements of Christianity to coincide with the 2010 Edinburgh celebrations. The purpose was to indicate the advances and contributions made to Christianity worldwide. The mere fact of the existence of the book as well as the way in which the content is presented is a reflection of an old paradigm in which Theology functioned and in some cases still does.

On a regional level the edited work by Isabel Phiri and Dietrich Werner (2013), *Handbook of theological education in Africa,* provides insight into matters on a continental scale. For attention to theological training in a South African context, compare the efforts by the faculty of Theology at the University of the Free State with the publication by R. Venter and F. Tolmie (eds.), 2012, *Transforming theological knowledge: Essays on theology and the university after apartheid.*

The question can easily be asked why there is so much attention worldwide being paid to higher education. Is it because there is much concern over something not going right or is there much to report on something going right? Perhaps it is rather a case of there is so much to be changed.

In the recent two decades in South African history much in society has changed. Not only social, economic and political changes took place, but also emphasis in hermeneutical approaches changed. Tertiary education needs to keep up in order to provide in the needs of a changed society. In order for Theology to remain relevant to society it has to keep up with not only structural changes but also changes in the way science is practised.

The Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria celebrates its centenary in 2017. For 100 years the Faculty of Theology has been hosted at a state-funded university. What will be necessary to ensure the continual existence of a Faculty of Theology at a university? Surely contributing to the well-being of local communities as well as the international academic society will make a Faculty of Theology indispensable.

This article wants to identify and describe the new world we are living in under a new paradigm to which Theology will need to adhere to. Penultimate the question as to how a Faculty of Theology

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1.Compare the reports by the Department of Higher Education in this regard: *Report on the Evaluation of 2012 Universities' Research Publication Outputs* (2014) and *Statistics on Post-School Training and Education in South Africa: 2011* (2013).

can do relevant Theology needs to be addressed. Finally an evaluation of the way in which the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria has kept up with changes and challenges will be presented. This article presents a journey through three worlds: (1) a world where the general changes in paradigms prescribe existence to all. The second world (2) consists of the world of faculties of Theology embedded in higher education and the third world (3) focusses on the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria.

A new world

Thomas Kuhn (1962) indicated the inevitability of change. Science not only brings about change but is also subject to change. The way people think, legitimise and construct science changes. We are victims of change and sometimes we are the cause of change. Kuhn (1962:84) describes the process by which paradigms change and the consequent way in which the world around us is perceived. People respond to the world they live in according to their scientific model or paradigm (Kuhn 1962:110). When people hold on to different paradigms they are, although living in the same reality, responding to reality as if they live in different worlds (Bosch 1991:184).

In some cases it might mean that the worlds are indeed different. The South African context may provide a challenge in this regard. The whole idea of science and paradigms that change may be viewed as foreign from an African perspective. The concept of science and paradigms are viewed as Western inventions and constructions. We end up with multiple realities viewing change and the need for it differently.

Broad consensus exists that humanity has passed through a pre-modern and a modern paradigm and is currently experiencing what is referred to as a postmodern paradigm. Ford (2011:43) shows the complexity of the matter by asking what this new paradigm ought to be called: 'modern, late modern, chastened modern, postmodern, a secular age, post-secular, religious and secular or none of these?' Surely a changed paradigm requires a changed view on Theology and education.

The emergence of a new paradigm, referred to as postmodern, during the late twentieth century, also presented challenges to religion[2] (Geaves & Chryssides 2007:59). A concise description of postmodernism as from a methodological position is presented by Geaves and Chryssides (2007:59). Postmodernism describes a condition where transformation in society outpaces progress. The pace of transformation creates uncertainty (Geaves & Chryssides 2007:59), anxiety and doubt (Geaves & Chryssides 2007:60). The characteristics of postmodern society are heterogeneity, fragmentation and pluralism. There no longer exists only one way of perceiving reality. This plays well into the South African context where different ideas as to what constitutes reality exist.

King (2009:202) describes how postmodernism pursues a sceptical deconstruction of all systems of thought along a

2. As any discussion on Theology falls within the discourse of religion, specific reference to religion will be made.

'hermeneutic of suspicion', echoing Ricoeur (King 2009:23). Postmodernism is suspicious and pessimistic. Religion requires a 'hermeneutic of trust' (King 2009:23), which was prevalent during the Enlightenment (modern period) emphasising certainty, trust and optimism. As to spiritual experiences, postmodern society exchanged the 'disenchanted and demystified world' declared by Weber, for an existence of desire and fantasy (Geaves & Chryssides 2007:60). The possibility of religion is actually opened up by postmodernism which increases possibilities through questioning rigid, fixed explanations. As to the claim of truth, postmodernism abandons any security based on a single claim of truth. There are many truths. Certainty fails as truth becomes relational. Pluralism characterises postmodern society (King 2009:202).

According to Hendriks (2014:3) paradigms determine how to do Theology. Theology, along with all other sciences, had been in the shackles of modernity for a very long time. Ever since Constantine declared Christianity state religion, a calm certainty has crept over Theology which was re-enforced by the rationality of modernism. This foundationalism made all and every statement by Christianity to be infallible. Carr (2006) defines foundationalism as:

> the only way that we can show they [our beliefs] are rational and true is to show how they rest on some basic beliefs – or foundations – that do not themselves stand in need of justification because they are, in some sense, 'indubitable', 'self-evident' or otherwise necessarily true. (p. 143)

Foundationalism would imply that there are truths existing independently of any context, in terms of time or space. Truths can be objective and universal. These truths exist to correct human thought, actions or ideas. These independent truths are rooted in the epistemological assumptions made by modernity.

For Hendriks (2014:4) there are only a few steps between foundationalism and fundamentalism. Foundationalism kept Theology within a rational framework and forced Theology into a 'fundamentalistic straightjacket' (Hendriks 2014:5). The result is that Theology has become set in an epistemological rut with inappropriate answers to a changing world.

Ever since the 'uncertainty principle' by Heisenberg (cf. Wheatley 1999:36–37) put a question mark over modernity and rationality, a new paradigm was eminent. Carr (2006:143) indicates how many different thinkers started asking to the plausibility of such existing universal truths. Ricoeur's 'hermeneutic of suspicion' played into this (King 2009:23). The uncertainty principle changed modernism's belief in rationality. It was realised that rationality had boundaries and limitations. Rationality cannot provide all answers to all mysteries in the universe. What emerged was a post-foundational way of understanding – a new epistemology which sets free from rationality and fixed truths (Hendriks 2014:5). Post-foundationalism indicates that there are no epistemological foundations that guarantee the truth of knowledge (Carr 2006:146). There is no objective ground outside ourselves that can substantiate any factual claims (Carr 2006:146).

Much rather we should perceive our coming to knowledge as an interpretive participation in a continual discourse. Knowledge is always embedded within a historical discourse.

Hendriks (2014:6) discusses the process how Theology shed an old paradigm and is only now realising the requirements set by the new paradigm. The need for change is echoed, as among others, by Wheatley (1999), Thiel (2008) and Van Huyssteen (1997) indicating the need for change along the line of what is referred to as 'post-foundationalism'.

Post-foundationalism requires humility in practising science. Statements are not made as authoritative claims. Scientific conclusions are not stated as if they are universal, infallible and uncontested truths. A degree of uncertainty must remain. Alternatives are possible and must be acknowledged and considered. The plurality of thought is emphasised. This however does not end in relativism. Every statement is no longer one made with certainty elevated to a theorem. Theology requires discernment to determine what scientific conclusions are and what faith-based convictions are.

The conclusion is that Theology is subject to change. The content as well as the way in which Theology is practised is influenced by changing paradigms. If there is a change in paradigm, Theology needs to redefine itself in order to find its appropriate place within this changing environment.

Theology at the University of Pretoria has been practised for the majority of its existence within the confinement of the modern paradigm. Now framed by a new paradigm, Theology will need to make some adjustments in order to remain relevant within a new world. Not only political, social and economic changes occurred in South Africa. The academic landscape worldwide has changed as well. A new epistemology determined new ways of thinking and creating knowledge. Science as well as Theology needs to adapt to this new paradigm in order to remain relevant.

Challenges faced by Theology

Theology as part of tertiary education[3] will need to evaluate its position at a university. Modern[4] universities grew out of the traditional form of universities originating during the Middle Ages and Renaissance periods.[5] Currently, many universities still subscribe to education principles dating from those periods (Woltersdorff 1996:91). Universities are reluctant to depart from these teaching principles as it would imply departing from tradition. Part of the traditional organisation of a university was to accommodate and host theological education at a higher education institution (compare D'Costa 2007:10). This tradition is now being reconsidered by many.

3. See Buitendag (2014:2) for an explanation of why rather to use the term 'education' than 'training'.

4. Here the term modern also refers to the paradigm of modernity.

5. Compare in this regard the voluminous work on the history of universities by H. De Ridder-Symoens (ed.), 1992, *A History of the Universities in Europe,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Theology stands in the centre of controversy at universities rediscovering their relevance. D'Costa (2007:2) indicates how some scholars such as Richard Dawkins argues that Theology has no place at a university. Woltersdorff (1996:92) identifies four distinct challenges theological education is facing today:

1. Universities want to provide general education to all its students. There is no room for particularities. Public universities do not want to specialise in any particular science or discipline. The profile of a student exiting the general training at university should be a whole human adult, trained in general in all faculties of humanness. Universities want to prevent particularism. To this Kelsey (2009:316) attests by indicating how universities tend to 'teach universal knowledge'. Some universities try and see all sciences as equal (Kelsey 2009:316) and none superior to the other. Later on we will see how this principle is not applied within all universities (compare 4).

Whether this is the case in South Africa needs to be discussed. A pluralistic society consisting of diversity in terms of race, culture, language, gender and religion is a given and cannot be denied. Universities in South Africa must embrace diversity and utilise it as strength. Students ought to be prepared to cope with the reality of diversity. Unity does not lie in uniformity but unity lies in acknowledging diversity. In this case plurality can contribute to a multi-perspective approach in addressing problems in life.

2. Public universities serve the broader society and should in principle accommodate all religions and their theologies (Woltersdorff 1996:97), and for argument sake, also a non-religious education. Public universities can no longer create the impression that only some religions receive the privilege of their theological training being hosted at a university. For Dawkins (in D'Costa 2007:2) the religious world where Theology use to function in has crumbled. Thinking is no longer done under a 'sacred canopy'.

In many cases Theology during the modern era ended up as the neutral, secular study of religion. This situation reflects a radical reaction to centuries of religious dominance at universities. Also the academic suspicion of religion contributed to this state of affairs. The critique by ideologies (i.e. fascism, communism, capitalism, scientific naturalism) against Theology added arguments against Theology. Religion was already studied through a range of disciplines: history, literary and social sciences, philosophy and psychology. The result was that universities could without much effort make Theology part of humanities, relinquishing Theology to Religious Studies as part of human behaviour (Ford 2011:149).

Kelsey (2009:317) indicates how in modern universities it is not only broader society that is served, but in fact public universities serve the state. Universities train people to be able to fulfil a (productive) function in society and contribute to the well-being of the state. Serving the well-being of the broader society entails taking into consideration those

members of society belonging to other or no religion. Universities in an endeavour to be inclusive cannot commit itself to exclusively favouring one religion.

D'Costa (2007:1) uses the metaphor of the Babylonian exile to indicate that the secular university acts as the confines wherein Theology is to function. Universities tend to strive towards being free from any religious attachment. There is however already talk of a post-secular era for universities.[6] Sommerville (2007) is of the opinion that the traditional universities proud of being secular was unable to provide answers to the deeper questions of life students asked. He suggests that Theology ought to be part of universities where students ask these deeper questions about life and meaning of existence. In this sense there is a (pastoral) necessity for Theology even at a secular institution of higher education. Peterson (2008:568) attests to this by indicating that Theology asks questions that no other discipline at a university addresses. Ream (2007:1) is of the opinion that to allow religions to take up a formative role at a university might be to release a new evil of which the consequences we are not yet aware of.

The purpose of the presence of religion at a university is to study religion as part of human behaviour in a scientific manner and not to utilise the public domain of a university as a stage for the advancement of doctrine of a particular religion. In this sense religion should be contained by the scientific restrictions set by a tertiary education institution. Theology as expression of religion should be permitted to contribute to the debate on campus on religion in a social dimension.

The third concern Woltersdorff (1996:93) mentions needs more of our attention.

3. Universities have traditionally differentiated a hierarchy of sciences.[7] On top is Natural Sciences and Mathematics and in descending order the other disciplines as regarded in terms of their assigned scientific character. At the bottom is Theology. Not far in front of Theology stands Human Sciences. According to Woltersdorff this differentiation is based on a principle laid down during the Middle Ages as to what constitutes *scientia*. The Natural Sciences and Mathematics were considered true sciences as they function according to a specific understanding of logic. These laws of logic do not apply to the other sciences in a similar way. Sciences ought to gather information based on experiments and visual results, employing rational thought processes, making conclusions through deduction, induction or abduction (Woltersdorff 1996:93). These processes cannot be employed in all sciences, such as Theology.

Woltersdorff (1996:93) judges that modern universities are still susceptible to these unfair principles of arranging sciences hierarchically. Peterson (2008:565) indicates how traditionally the argument against Theology was that

6. Compare Sommerville, 2007, *The Decline of the secular University*. Also compare the commentary by Ream, T.C., 2007, The devil we know? Books and Culture 13.3. p. 19.

7. Apparently Theology was considered the queen of all sciences. This notion gradually dissipated (D'Costa 2007:10).

disciplines at a university subscribe to the rules of rationality. Theology is perceived to base its findings on sources of revelation that are taken as given and not open for scrutiny or verification. The true argument underlying this is however the polarity of faith and reason. This creates increasing difficulty for Theology to legitimise its place as science at a university. In this regard the debate on the scientific nature of Theology has already been conducted. Pannenberg (1973) and McGrath (2001, 2002, 2003) provide clarity on this matter, convincingly indicating Theology is indeed science, able to maintain its position among other sciences.

(4) A fourth concern for the place of Theology at a university is the tendency of universities to emphasise the vocational training of professionals and especially focussing on the technological needs of society (Woltersdorff 1996:99). All sciences, not only Theology, who seem to be unable to contribute in some real way to the visible benefit of society, experience discrimination in various forms. These sciences are looked upon as if to be inferior sciences (compare point 1. above). These sciences are not considered priority when distribution of funding for research or expanding of personnel is decided on. These sciences are tolerated since they are part of the tradition of a university inherited from a previous dispensation. Theology is even tolerated at a university as it creates the perception that Theology will instil a sense of ethical character through moral formation of students at a university (Kelsey 2009:318).

Peterson (2008:564) warns that Theology should not live under the illusion that the presence of Theology at a university is an indication of the acceptance of Theology. For Peterson it can easily happen that Theology is accommodated at a university but the university proceeds as if Theology did not exist (2008:564). Theology is tolerated but not recognised. The presence of Theology is viewed as a necessity but not a priority.

5. A fifth element not mentioned by Woltersdorff, but which is however important to take note of, is the tendency of universities to commercialise knowledge. Universities are excelling in the business of producing knowledge. Knowledge has become a commodity to be exchanged for profit. The focus has more and more turned to making profit than creating knowledge for the sake of knowledge (cf. D'Costa 2007:2).

Rüegg (1992:32) identifies this element as in direct opposition of a defining category of universities continued from the medieval origins of universities. Creating knowledge used to be for the sake of public good and not for profit. To this Ford (2005:86) comments that in recent times scientific knowledge has been economically utilised. Pursuit of knowledge has been reduced to economic interest. This is in discontinuance with the medieval heritage of universities.

Even Theology has fallen victim to this abuse. Compare in this regard Makgoba's (1996:114) suggestion to remove from

universities completely or relegate Theology as a subdiscipline to other faculties, because it serves no economic end. The consideration of continuance of Theology at universities is measured against this criterion. This adds additional pressure on theologians to produce in order to remain relevant.

There is however a different positive position on this matter. Peterson (2008:569) indicates how the research done by universities act as catalyst for new business enterprises and development of new technology or methodology in order to advance medicine, industry or defence systems. Public enterprises benefit from the research done at universities. This again leads to further investments in research. Universities and the public sector need one another in order to work to the advancement of social life. This also applies to Theology. Research done by Theology for instance on ethical matters (cf. Peterson 2008:569) leads to the improvement of for example human rights of all members of society. If the research is not funded it cannot be published and make any impact on society. The commercialisation of knowledge has become an evil we cannot do without.

On the state of universities in South Africa Jansen (2003:9) prefers to describe the condition as the 'declining state of universities in South Africa'. In his article Jansen identifies five major concerns he has about South African higher education. The fourth and fifth concerns are relevant to our discussion here. Jansen (2003:10) identifies the decline of quality and volume of research output. This is in spite of government support and international financial input to build and develop a new level of competence. Jansen (2003:10) identifies at the root of this problem the level of teaching: a reduction of education to remediation in the form of academic development and an emphasis on technological innovation. Knowledge should not only be transmitted but it should transform (Jansen 2003:11). Closely connected to this is the fifth concern. Jansen (2003:11) raises the issue of the replacement of the voice of criticism that tertiary institutions had during the anti-apartheid struggle with a voice of complaint in order to serve institutional self-interest in terms of funding and support from government.

Reality is however that a lack of funding does hamper scientific progress at tertiary institutions. Cherry (2010) reported on this matter internationally by indicating how scientists in South Africa are experiencing a growing lack of financial support and funding to conduct necessary research. This hampers the scientific growth expected of tertiary institutions. The implications of diminishing financial support should be seen together with the growing pressure on university communities to produce knowledge in order to profit from it.

6. One of the main challenges and implications for Theology under a new paradigm is to create a new curriculum (Hendriks 2012). Mugambi (2013:117) attests to the necessity of the transformation of the curriculum. As to what such a new curriculum should look like, Ford (2011:161) identifies three pillars orientating the formation of a new curriculum: theology should engage with God, the church and society.

Pannenberg (1973:299) indicates that the only object of Theology should be the problem of God. The task of Theology is therefore to introduce God appropriately within every context. The church becomes the vehicle introducing God. Theology is therefore done by and in the local congregation when engaging with society. The way in which this engagement should take place is imaginative, thorough, wise, quality orientated and in conversation with other disciplines (Ford 2011:161). A new curriculum should constantly keep the mandate of the institution in mind namely to train pastors for the church. Kelsey (2009:323) reminds that Theology, in the process of constructing a new curriculum, should recognise the interplay between the audiences of Theology, namely the university (academic, scholarly work), the church (serving intellectually) and the public square (advising and addressing other religions, secularities and ideologies).

Now that several challenges produced by a new paradigm have been identified, we can move on to try and suggest appropriate responses from Theology to these challenges.

How to do relevant Theology

The challenges Theology faces in a current dispensation put pressure on Theology to re-invent itself in order to fit into a new tertiary education structure. Buitendag (2014:2) identifies two challenges to Theology at a university: firstly that of fideism, staying true to the tradition of a church and secondly, secularism. These two opposites form the boundaries through which Theology needs to steer in order to find its own identity.

Woltersdorff (1996:96) mentions several ways in which Theology has reacted in efforts to try and justify its claim as science and a rightful place at university, namely, (1) In some instances those sections of Theology which cannot be empirically substantiated are considered to be issues of faith and are not open to the scrutiny of science as practised at university. (2) Some efforts are to maintain the traditional Christian theological terminology but fill the concepts with new content as long as it corresponds to the original intention. These content are sometimes described as anti-realistic. (3) There are even attempts at redefining Theology as a whole. Theology is then interpreted to be the reflexion on the message of God as presented in congregations and not a reflexion on God. These attempts are however not convincing to Woltersdorff (1996:96). For him these attempts will only end in obscurity where no one will recognise Theology or the reflexion on God. For Woltersdorff (1996:89) this is the essential task of Theology: the reflexion on God.[8]

The problem Theology has to face in our current time (according to Scharmer 2013 as quoted in Hendriks 2014) is disconnectedness. This summarises the challenges posed at

8. Compare Pannenberg (1973:300).

Theology. Disconnectedness plays out on three levels for Scharmer: disconnected to nature, to the other and to the self. Woltersdorff (1996:96) adds a fourth: for him Theology cannot be disconnected from a faith community. Should this happen, Theology will end in obscurity. This is the life-line Woltersdorff foresees for Theology at a university. Faith communities should, based on their experiences of faith, inquire from Theology at a university to explain their convictions and questions found in real life. Theology will need such a close connection to faith communities (congregations) in order to stay relevant. Thus Theology will constantly create a creative interplay between God, the church and society.[9] Without such connection to faith communities, Theology at university will cut its own chord of existence (Woltersdorff 1996:97).

I suggest in order for Theology to remain relevant at a university, it needs to engage contextually with society, do interdisciplinary Theology, engage with interreligious dialogue and still remain connected to faith communities.

Theology engaging contextually with society

Theology's presence is required at a university, if for nothing else, then at least for good conversation. Peterson (2008:570) points out how theologians can through interaction with scholars and students present positions and perspectives unique from a theological point of view. Theology needs to engage with society and society needs to engage with Theology: together addressing social concerns.

The disconnectedness to society (part of 'the other' mentioned by Scharmer) needs to be addressed. There is a need for interaction between knowledge and society (Collins 1998). Theology in order to remain relevant will need to address issues in their own local context. The problem however is, as Nadar (2007:238) indicates, that Theology no longer knows how to do Theology. To contextualise Theology is not only to take cognisance after analysing the context but Theology should be committed to transforming the context. Compare in this regard Karecki's (2003:74) suggestion that Theology has this task in a South African context to contribute to the transformation of higher education. Firstly, the inner self of the person is transformed (2003:76), and secondly Theology contributes to the transformation of the broader context of society (Karecki 2003:78), thereby connecting the inner self as well as reconnecting society. In this way Theology can contribute to stimulating social cohesion.

Maluleke (2001:125–143) describes the condition of disconnectedness as 'theological impotence'. With this statement Maluleke tries to indicate the inability of Theology to address problems in society properly and adequately. This position he reiterates with the aptly named article 'Does Theological Education equip you to help your sister?' (2006:61). Theologians are trained in a Western form of theologising but are unable to respond epistemologically adequately to social problems in a new context (Nadar 2007:239). The problem then lies on two fronts: an inability due to a traditional way of practising Theology (analysing and taking cognisance) but also deeper to the core of Theology, a change in epistemology is required.

In academic terms, Ukpong *et al.* (2002) indicates that epistemological preference is given to Western modes of intellectual production. To be accepted in the global world of academics one has to do things the Western way. There is no consideration for cultural differences. There should however be different ways of doing Theology. Theology should engage with society. This engagement should be according to a different epistemology that has been the case up till now. This 'new epistemology' should allow Theology to engage with social problems in order to change the way society exists.

Theological education deriving from all over the world needs to be taken into account. Not only Western forms of Theology should be recognised. Maluleke (2001:142) suggests that Theology needs to start paying attention to African women Theology, Black Theology and Liberation Theology. The call is to acknowledge the legitimacy of all contextual theologies. All theologies should be seen as contextual theologies.

When doing Theology in Africa, it must be Africa which must inform Theology on how to do contextual Theology. Kombo (2013:101) describes the historic development of Theological Education in Africa. He indicates how Theological Education during the colonial period delivered a trained skilled elite class that was ill prepared for the questions the African context produced. Theological Education according to Kombo (2013:105) will have to break with the past (implying the colonial era and Western Theology) and focus on the African reality. Maluleke (2006:69) indicates how the process of Africanisation of Theology can be cosmetic in the sense that Africans remain the consumers of Theology produced by Westerners. Africans must become the theological educators. Until this happens, Theology and religious education will remain foreign to the African context (Maluleke 2006:71). Theology done by Africans in Africa has relevance to the context.

Any Faculty of Theology in Africa must therefore make sure they nurture and employ African theologians enabling Africans to theologise in a local context.[10] All living in Africa can and ought to participate and contribute to contextual Theology. There cannot be any classification as to who is more African than others. All in Africa can and must contribute.

Only when Theology manages to transform societies will it count as 'real theology' (Nadar 2007:240). Compare the suggestions made by LeMarquand and Galgalo (2004) for theological training in Africa: African Theology should take note of the following categories in society: the marginalised (i.e. the poor, children and women), people with HIV and religious pluralism (including Islam). Nadar (2007:237)

9.Compare Ford (2011:161) mentioned earlier.

10.Jansen's (2003:10–11) warning as to the irresponsible quick promotion of African scholars at tertiary institutions in South Africa must however be heeded.

suggests there should be consideration for all. Theology in South Africa can no longer afford to serve and address the needs of only one segment of society.

Part of the voiceless society that is in need of the attention of Theology is the ecological concern. The disconnectedness to nature mentioned by Scharmer (in Hendriks 2014) needs to be addressed by Theology in a responsible way. Environmentalism cannot end in cheap morals by a society feeling guilty of neglecting nature. Theology needs to educate society how to respond in an appropriate way to environmental concerns over creation.

To rectify disconnectedness to society a new ecological concern is an attempt at restoring a connection to Nature. The Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria has made this a focal point of research. As to social disengagement, post-foundational Theology brings us in close contact with 'the other'. Interreligious Theology should be a concern. The 'self' refers to our spiritual disconnectedness reflected in a technocratic governed world. Post-foundational Theology opens up the scope for Theology to address the needs of all in society. Hendriks (2014:5–7) identifies that Theology done holistically is a characteristic of post-foundationalism. If Theology is practised holistically, it will acknowledge the contributions of different theologies.

The face of tertiary education in South Africa has from the end of 2015, beginning of 2016, entered a new dimension, that of student participation in social matters. Students not only stood up for educational rights and privileges but also confronted government to bring about changes in the broader labour sector in order to address economic inequality in South Africa. The student protests were not only concerned with educational matters but now saw a concern for broader social issues. And still these matters are related. Economic inequality impacts on accessibility to tertiary education. The Faculty of Theology most probably stands in this situation before two options: either withdrawing to a pure academic position, maintaining the status quo of academic privileges to the few who can afford it (this position will imply retracting further into the ivory[11] towers) or engage with reality and facilitate social transformation. Accessibility and affordability of tertiary education is no longer a practical or qualitative matter but puts an ethical appeal to South African society.

Interdisciplinary Theology

Hendriks (2014:5–7) indicates that post-foundationalism requires Theology to be done interdisciplinary. Green (2011:27) further indicates how Van Huyssteen's understanding of post-foundationalism contributes to an interdisciplinary study of Theology.[12] Theology can no longer be practised in isolation; the doors have opened, welcoming all. Theological education should be considered and planned in collaboration with other disciplines. This collaboration should include

11.Reference to ivory also has a subtle suggestion as to affluence.

12.Compare in this regard Van Huyssteen (2000).

interdisciplinarity and even trans-disciplinarity. In effect this would imply that Theology is practised interdenominational (ecumenism), in contact with theologies from different continents (globalisation), focussing on being locally relevant (continentalisation) and be sensitive towards local cultural diversity (intercultural connectedness).

Interdisciplinarity leads to interreligious conversation. In this regard Ford (2011:84) refers to the process of interdisciplinarity as the 'sociability of theology' – the ability to learn from and with others. In effect this implies ecumenism. Ford (2011:95) sees theological training as finding your place in the 'ecosystem' of training – either a denominational niche or a larger ecumenical niche. Both ways contribute to the 'flourishing of the ecology'. Theology can contribute to society and to others, especially religious communities not sharing in the same denominational beliefs practised at the Faculty of Theology (Ford 2011:149).

Theology can no longer be restricted to a group of like-minded theologians. In-breeding leads to impotence, stretching the metaphor of Maluleke (2001:125). In an effort of facilitating theological education internationally, Werner suggests two projects in order to achieve the goal. A global electronic library for Theology students is to be set up (Werner 2012:436). Through this Werner believes resources will be made available on a larger scale. Theology education institutions are also encouraged (Werner 2012:438) to share all possible resources. In this way theological education connects locally and internationally.

Theology can only be truly relevant when it connects to all members of society. Theology needs to be practised interculturally – connecting to local communities. Farisani (2010:293) refers to this as the theological challenge to mind ethniticity. Theology can and should contribute to intercultural dialogue, stimulating inclusivity and non-discrimination (Dames 2012:238). In this regard Venter (2008:542) indicates how Theology disappointed in the response to complexity and diversity of cultures. Instead Theology should contribute to the creation of community amongst people (Venter 2008:545). Theology should inform faith communities and train pastors to be able to facilitate this effort at creating community (Dames 2012:246).

Interreligious dialogue

Theology is no longer the sole domain of Christianity. Post-foundationalism opens up the possibility of interreligious conversation. In a pluralistic society Christianity has become part of a globalised economy with diverse interests also including non-religion. In order to survive and remain relevant Theology will in future need to engage with interreligious dialogue, conducting research in collaboration with other faith communities. Research and teaching at a tertiary institution can no longer be done by and for only one religion. Theology should foresee a collaboration of Christian Theology with for example Jewish, Hindu and Muslim Theologies. Post-foundationalism opens up the scope and

encourages Theology to approach the borders where the worlds of other religions lie beyond.

State-funded universities can no longer afford to host only one theological tradition with preference to one religion in a pluralistic society. Theology has the task of making society aware of questions between and about religions. Theology will also need to educate a pluralistic society on other religions. This will encourage tolerance and bring about understanding between religions.

Along these lines the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria has strategically positioned itself in preparation for the future. The faculty has suggested its name be changed to Faculty of Theology and Religion in order to reflect this openness to interreligious conversation. This is however not an attempt at syncretising religion but rather increasing opportunities for interreligious dialogue where each conversation partner maintains its autonomy.

Remain connected to faith communities

For Theology to remain viable and vibrant it cannot function oblivious to the questions religious people ask and challenges they encounter. Woltersdorff as well as Ford emphasised the importance of Theology to remain connected to its faith communities. Peterson (2008:565) attests to this by stating the extreme: 'Academic theology divorced from church and community is therefore not real theology'. Theology derives from and is directed at faith communities. 'Christian theology is a collaborative enterprise inseparable from membership of the church' (Ford 2011:90).

Theology does not merely have a descriptive and explanatory nature. It also possesses a directive and prescriptive responsibility. Peterson (2008:569) refers to the prophetic voice of Theology. It is no longer only the church that looks at Theology for advice, but also society at large is in need of prophetic direction. Farisani (2010:293) reminds of the social role of Theology of moral regeneration. The time of the academic privilege of residing in ivory towers has long passed. Theology cannot participate in the pursuit of knowledge without addressing the needs and concerns of the world (cf. Peterson 2008:569). Jansen (2003:11) refers to the 'prophetic voice' necessary in higher education to guide and inform the South African society. Theology can indeed fulfil this requirement of being the critical voice on campus guiding the young minds of the different faith communities to reflect on social injustices.

Theology has the dual task of preparing pastors to serve in faith communities. It is clear to Farisani (2010:293) that local churches in South Africa need to be equipped to respond appropriately to religious plurality. But Theology has an additional task of training professional theologians ready to act professionally as people knowledgeable on theological matters. Compare in this regard Kelsey's metaphoric description of Theology's task of formation and professionalisation (in Stortz 2011:373). Formation follows in the philosophy of *paideia*, emphasising *being*, and professionalisation in the academic tradition of Theology as profession, emphasising *doing*. Theology needs to orientate itself around the tasks required by the faith community Theology serves. A balance will always be necessary. Not all want to become professional theologians. Some want to be pastors. Theology needs to structure its curriculum in such a way that the needs of the faith communities are met.

Where is the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria heading?

The actual question is not whether a faculty of Theology has a place at a South African university. The question much rather is what kind of Theology will such a Faculty of Theology produce in Africa? The debate on this question is not over (Bujo 2003:182). Compare the discussions by Ukpong *et al.* (2002), Nadar (2007) and Maluleke (2006) on this matter. Theology will need to acknowledge its own diverse nature. Within a post-foundational paradigm there is no longer fixed truths when it comes to seeking theological opinions. In a post-foundational paradigm Theology practised in South Africa will need to recognise, for one, the existence and value of African Theology.

The culmination of the debate on whether there is something like African Theology is reflected in the Vanneste-Tshibangu controversy. Tharcisse Tshibangu was a student at the newly established (1954) University of Lovanium, Kinshasa, when Alfred Vanneste was the newly appointed Dean of the Faculty of Theology of Lovanium (Bujo 2003:179). Tshibangu was in favour of a 'Theology of African colour' (Bujo 2003:179). This was based on the assumption that African culture had a unique and original system of thought. For Tshibangu it was logical to talk about a unique African form of Theology just as there exist many other different forms of Theology. This African Theology suggested by Tshibangu should be expressed in non-Aristotelian categories and include an existential and holistic world-view (Bongmba 2006:250). This reflected a plurality of theologies (Bujo 2003:179). Today this is accepted as a logical paradigm. On the other side Vanneste defended a position denying the existence of something called African Theology (Bujo 2003:180). For Vanneste there existed only a universal Catholic Theology (Bongmba 2006:25). Theologians from Africa much rather should seek the universal (theological) truth. African theologians, Vanneste suggested, should construct a Theology relevant to their context but based on Western philosophy (Bujo 2003:180).

Bujo evaluates the position of Vanneste as reflecting a denial of cultural pluralism (2003:180). In this regard also compare Bongmba's (2006:250) emphasis on plurality. Culture may question the text just as the text may question culture (Bujo 2003:181). A certain hermeneutics is required here. The individual is constantly reflecting on tradition from a certain context. The tradition brings the individual in conversation with the past, the present and the future. Tradition does not impose the past on any one (Bujo 2003:181). Cultural elements therefore become markers in the process of understanding

the tradition in such a way that it is relevant to the present while remaining true to the past and providing guidance to the future.

Cultural values however do not become the only determining factors. Bujo (2003:181) indicates how elements such as social, economic and technological considerations should also determine Theology. A culturally centred Theology remains incomplete without a holistic understanding of reality. This is particularly true of an African world-view (compare Bujo 2003:182). Bujo pleads for a Theology from Africa that reflects not only cultural considerations but also economic and social elements. Theology should not only consider the liberation from social and economic elements (Bujo 2003:181) but should also stay true to cultural (i.e. world-view) orientations. A true Theology from Africa requires an all-encompassing perspective (i.e. cultural, social, economic and technological). This is the challenge faculties of Theology in (southern) Africa must engage. Challenges Maluleke (2006:68) rightly asks whether 'South African theological educators are ready for'.

The Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria is well aware of these challenges and has identified the following vision and mission guiding its own existence currently and for the near future[13]:

Vision: To be a faculty recognised for its creative engagement with life-giving Theology and religious insight, of service to academia, church and community.

Mission: To achieve this, we commit ourselves to: –

    Providing relevant theological and religious education;
    Nurturing transformative leaders;
    Quality research;
    Promoting justice, peace, the integrity of creation and a reconciling diversity; and
    Engaging people on the margins of society.

From this it is clear that the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria is well aware of the responsibility to do Theology connected to society, to God and to the church. Several community engagement projects have been launched by the faculty and are managed successfully. Theological discussions are always conversations not only about God's presence in the world, but starts off with discussions with God. The high emphasis on reading the Old and New Testament in the original Greek and Hebrew attests to this serious search for the meaning of the Word of God. Several denominations have partnered with the faculty in order to have their ministers trained by the faculty. Public lectures and further training for ministers are also presented as service to the local faith communities. In this way the faculty stays connected to the local faith communities. Local in this sense refers to culturally diverse faith communities. In this sense Theology is born from Africa by Africans for Africans.

13. Faculty plan 2015.

The Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria does not see itself to be a victim of a new paradigm, but rather endeavours to be a leader exploring the frontiers of a new epistemology (post-foundationalism). Structural renewal still presents a challenge in the sense that the Faculty is still following the arrangement of six traditional disciplines. As this is based on an academic decision conforming to international standards it should not necessarily be regarded as a remnant of a Western arrangement of Theology.

Disseminating research outputs also poses a challenge. As discussed above, the financial pressure on any academic institution is immense. Success is still measured to a large degree in terms of production of publications. Emphasis should rather be on quality than quantity. Besides this criterion there should also be the balance between internationally recognised and locally relevant publications. To be a Faculty of Theology in Africa, Theology for a local community should be produced.

The Faculty of Theology does not present itself as 'arrived', as having all the correct and relevant answers required by a new paradigm. There will always be a struggle for relevance. Relevance can only be considered when the local context is taken into account again and again. In this regard Brueggemann's (1991:100) words serve as guideline: Theological education should always be inventing itself within each social setting and cultural circumstance.

The Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria can still improve its relevance in the following matters:

Contextual Theology: A concern with social matters need not only be addressed in terms of content. Transforming society is indeed necessary. The prophetic and critical voice of Theology cannot be silent. Contextual Theology however also needs to reflect a contextualised epistemology. In this regard the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria still needs to pay attention to the approach of Theology. Theology cannot be the supplanted science coming from a different continent, entering a new environment and pretend to continue business as usual. Theology in Africa can also not deny its non-African roots with all the insights gathered from other cultures over centuries. The Vanneste–Tshibangu debate needs to be continued within these perimeters. A balance between the past and the present is necessary in order to travel to the future. The tradition brought from a foreign continent must be translated in cultural terms relevant to the local context.

In this regard Farisani (2010:293) identifies that Theology has the challenge of ethnicity. The re-curriculisation needs to keep ethnic issues in mind. Only in this way can Theology be truly contextual.

Women Theology: Although some research has been undertaken on post-graduate level on the theme of women Theology, the Faculty of Theology still needs to acknowledge the need for a feminist understanding of Theology. Isabel

Phiri (2008) has championed this topic to ensure it stays under the attention of theological consideration. Membership of various Christian denominations tends to be more and more female. Women are filling leadership positions in the Church. Service to the Christian community is already driven by women laity. The role of women in Christianity needs to be acknowledged and expanded.

A Faculty of Theology should reflect this awareness. In this sense the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria has made huge inroads at addressing equal opportunities for and appointments of male and female staff. This process has however been driven institutionally and not from an academic conviction. Some reflection on this is still necessary.

Interreligious engagement: Even with a name change to become the Faculty of Theology and Religion, the true interreligious engagement is still outstanding. Being aware of the other and even recognising their presence in social capacity does not act as substitute for active engagement.

The conditions for interreligious engagement should clearly be set as to remain sensitive to church partners of the Faculty of Theology. Interreligious engagement is reciprocal dialogue without only seeking similarities. It also entails clearly indicating differences. Dialogue is not attempts at conversion nor syncretism. By understanding the other the self-identity is re-enforced. The Faculty of Theology can attempt through an evolutionary approach to gradually invite as dialogue partners representatives of different religions. Discussion of a communal topic can be part of the meeting.

Conclusion

A changed world requires a changed outlook. Theology is in need of a new approach at doing Theology. The Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria finds itself in the midst of changing times: on a local level the socio-economic-political changes of a democratic South Africa; on a regional level processes of change in terms of de-colonisation and continentalisation; and on an international scale challenges to tertiary education. Celebrating its centenary in 2017 places the Faculty of Theology at an opportune position: change is now!

Acknowledgements
Competing interests

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