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AN EMBODIED SPIRITUALITY: PERSPECTIVES FOR A BODILY PASTORAL ANTHROPOLOGY

ABSTRACT

Important new developments within practical theology and, in particular, within pastoral theology have taken place over the past decades. In terms of a post-foundational practical theology, this article endeavours from a hermeneutical perspective to explore overlaps between various domains of sciences. As part of a re-described spiritual embodied anthropology, it is claimed that the mind-body dualism is outdated and that the roots of human corporeality are to be rediscovered. The article investigates the effect of an emphasis on the biological for a pastoral anthropology in terms of its implications for one's concept of God, one's view on personal identity, the affirmation of being relation-orientated, and the importance of context. Taking these perspectives to the marketplace, the article considers the meaning of the spirituality of an embodied soul at work. In formulating these perspectives, the emphasis is on an engagement with the other and his/her world.



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1. INTRODUCTION

In the late 1970s, a German anatomist, Gunther von Hagens, developed the plastination technique, revealing inner anatomical structures. Since the first exhibition of Body Worlds in Tokyo in 1995, more than 20 million people have seen the travelling exhibition portraying 200 specimens of real bodies and organ systems (Wikipedia 2007). One of the images portrayed is that of a praying man holding his heart in his hands.¹ In my opinion, this not only depicts the intimate relationship between body and soul, but also metaphorically points to an embodied understanding of spirituality in pastoral care. In this article, I wish to advocate the importance of construing a more bodily theological anthropology and spirituality for pastoral care, embodying a new understanding of engagement with various scientific domains. In formulating these perspectives, I wish to contribute to a practice-orientated theorisation as part of the character of practical theology.

2. AN EMBODIED ANTHROPOLOGY/SPIRITUALITY?

It seems unfortunate that

very few works in pastoral theology pay special attention to anthropology. A specific anthropology is often implied, but without giving an explicit description or an exposition on how this anthropology influences counselling and therapy (Louw 1999:17).

However, perspectives informed by a Cartesian and dualistic division between body and soul (Lakoff & Johnson 1999:554; Ganzevoort & Veerman 2000:90; Murphy 2006:2; Du Toit 2006:1257) seem to underlie and determine the dominant pastoral anthropology as being two facets of the human being, a spiritual and a corporeal way of existing, that constantly interfere (Immink 2003:32).

The Cartesian reading of the dualistic division between body and soul, which has served as the only standard (Lakoff & Johnson 1999:554; Ganzevoort & Veerman 2000:90; Du Toit 2006:1257), was expanded by others who proposed a further trichotomy between body, soul and spirit, while others only viewed the spiritual aspect (Murphy 2006:2-3).

The above indicates not only that pastoral theology does not sufficiently reflect on pastoral anthropology, but also that initially traditional theological anthropologists gave little or no recognition to corporeality while the dualistic division between body and soul has, among other things, been maintained. It is obvious that, if the initial reading of the traditional dichotomy between body

1 Photo: Jayme West: <http://www.ktar.com/?nid=2378sid=352293> [2008, 26 August].

and soul is followed, “we are essentially disembodied Souls not of this world ... focused on transcending all the things of the world” (Lakoff & Johnson 1999: 564). Such an understanding gives rise to the dangerous possibility that our relationship with God and the world can in totality be attenuated and, for a variety of reasons, may be ignored as a theological problem. This article addresses this problem by arguing that an enriched understanding of pastoral anthropology and spirituality implies that “faith is always embodied in concrete living” (Ahner 2007:19).

3. THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN PASTORAL CARE

Research indicates that numerous new developments have taken place over the past decades within the field of practical theology (Dreyer 1998:14-15) and in the formation of pastoral theory (Louw 1999:21-27; Ganzevoort 2001:53-58; Louw 2003:36), with specific emphasis on pastoral therapy (Stone 2001:185-193; Immink 2003:224-228; Scholtz 2005:140-141).

During the twentieth century pastoral care underwent particular evolutionary developments. A kerygmatic, therapeutic and, since the seventies, a new hermeneutic phase can be distinguished in which theology and therapy occur in a bipolar relationship (Foskett & Lyall 1988:49-50; Scholtz 2005:141). Various paradigmatic movements can be identified in the development of pastoral theory (Müller 1996:7-17; Louw 1999:23-29; Ganzevoort 2001:53-58; Louw 2005:7-9). First, there is a movement from a one-sided preaching model to a participatory pastorate in which the pastor is instrumental in guiding people to the discovery of God’s involvement in their lives. The context being taken into account and the shift from the one-sided professional approach to the mutual caring of believers are important in this movement. Secondly, there is a movement from a therapeutic- to a hermeneutic-orientated pastorate emphasising and acknowledging

... the endeavour to read, understand and interpret texts within contexts. Hermeneutics underlined anew the importance of our human quest for meaning ... (and) the importance of compassion: the dimension of pathos in theology (Louw 2003:54).

In line with these developments within practical theology, a reading of “post-foundational practical theology” as described by Müller (2005:72-88), following the work of Wentzel J. van Huyssteen (1998; 1999; 2006) and Calvin O. Schrag (1992; 1997) is essential: one moves from, among other things, either a rigid “foundationalist” position or a relativist “anti-foundationalist” position to a “post-foundationalist” position, with the emphasis on “plausible forms of interdisciplinary dialogue” (Demasure & Müller 2006:418).

Travelling in the space created by a post-foundational practical theology, with longitudes and latitudes of modernity and post-modernity and where the various perspectives from science are entertained, one notices the so-called post-modern *anthropological approach* to spirituality, as mapped out by Schneiders (2005:26):

This approach is rooted in the recognition that spirituality is an anthropological constant, a constitutive dimension of the humanum. Human beings are characterized by a capacity for self-transcendence toward ultimate value, whether or not they nurture this capacity or do so in religious or non-religious ways ...

Using the above as possible co-ordinates in formulating a post-foundational pastoral theological embodied anthropology, it is taken for granted that pastoral care presupposes the human being and that insights into anthropological views from theological, philosophical and human sciences determine not only the pastoral encounter, but also the therapeutic outcome (Lester 1995:4; Louw 1999:17; Ganzevoort & Visser 2007:37). When theology and other sciences endeavoured to answer the questions about “who and what the human being is”, newer perspectives eventually challenged earlier travelling positions and even supplanted them (Kelsey 2006:55). In a newer description of this position, it was discovered, among other things, that

... [a] casual survey of the literature of theology and biblical studies throughout this century, then, shows a gradual replacement of a dualistic account of the person, along with the view of the afterlife based on the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, first by a recognition of the holistic character of biblical conceptions of the person, often while still presupposing temporarily separable “parts”, and then by a holistic but also physicalist account of the person (Murphy 2002:vii).

When acknowledging that recent research emphasises the importance and meaning of corporeality (Murphy 2006; Van Huyssteen 2006; Du Toit 2006), it is important in describing its meaning for pastoral theology to take the view that is “conceptually hospitable to anthropological claims warranted well by those sciences ...” (Kelsey 2006:44). Schneiders (2005:26) agrees:

The anthropological approach to Christian spirituality, while taking seriously the historical and theological dimensions of the subject matter of the field, is also explicitly concerned with dimensions of spirituality that are accessible only to non-theological disciplines, such as the aesthetic, linguistic, psychological, or cosmological: with the “edges” where the field of spirituality is influenced by important aspects of contemporary experience that are not intrinsic to Christianity itself, such as the meaning of experience, ecological concerns, and gender issues; with the analogies with, challenges to, and affirmations of Christian experience coming from

the spiritualities of other religious traditions or the spiritualities of contemporary seekers who repudiate or ignore institutional religion.

If the discussion on pastoral anthropology enters the space where routes from different disciplines meet, one can but note the emphasis on the new mapping out of a theological anthropology in which the human being is understood as “an embodied soul and a spirited body” (Louw 2005:16). In creating this space, in which an opportunity is offered for perspectives from science in order to broaden the theological anthropological understanding, Murphy (2006:ix) stresses the following:

[W]e are our bodies — there is no additional metaphysical element such as mind or soul or spirit. But secondly, this “physicalist” position need not deny that we are intelligent, moral, and spiritual. We are, at our best, complex physical organisms, imbued with the legacy of thousand of years of culture, and most importantly, blown by the Breath of God’s Spirit; we are Spirited bodies.

Recent research has shown that there is a global growth in spiritual consciousness (McCarthy 2003:193). In negotiating the meaning of a more bodily emphasis in an embodied pastoral anthropology on spiritual consciousness, the following route markers may be mapped out.

4. AN EMBODIED ANTHROPOLOGY/SPIRITUALITY: A HERMENEUTICAL POST-FOUNDATIONAL PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL ENDEAVOUR

“Anthropology is essentially a hermeneutical problem” (Louw 1999:157). In particular, a hermeneutical methodology is essential in which spirituality as a universal human concern for transcendence and meaning is enriched by means of a variety of religious traditions and scholarly disciplines (Schneiders 2005:25). It is from this point of view that the importance of the biological source of human rationality, the “critical biological underpinnings to all social actions” (Kandel 1998:460) can, among other things, be recognised, leading to the discovery of new horizons of understanding. Once this is acknowledged, the question arises as to why these perspectives might be important for pastoral care on its journey to the possible discovery of new anthropological accents. One possible perspective on this question is that

[O]ur views on what it means to be a human being are important not only for medicine, but for all scientific and professional disciplines, in fact for the whole functioning of society (Kriel 2002:136).

Upon entering this relatively new domain of biological reflection one notices that, since the late 1990s, a dramatic development has taken place in the field of neuro- and cognitive sciences and in negotiating their meaning for human existence (Buitendag 2004:67). Lakoff & Johnson (1999:568) highlight and interpret the importance of this research as follows:

Cognitive science, the science of the mind and the brain, has in its brief existence been enormously fruitful. It has given us a way to know ourselves better, to see how our physical being — flesh, blood, and sinew, hormone, cell, and synapse — and all things we encounter daily in the world make us who we are. This is philosophy in the flesh.

Du Toit (2002:2) is thus correct in writing that “neuroscientific models for religious experience abound and challenge theologians to respond”. In my opinion, it is the task of practical theology to reflect on the abovementioned and to describe it responsibly for the formation of theory which has implications for practice. By taking cognisance of scientific results, theology and, in particular, practical theology and pastoral care, can enrich their own contribution by, among other things, formulating a pastoral anthropology. Research in this article emphasises the fact that not only theological reflection, but also the formulation of a pastoral anthropology, “is radically shaped not only by its social, historical and cultural context, but also by the biology roots of human rationality” (Van Huyssteen 1998:xiii).

The epistemological and methodological accents are embodied in an ongoing process in order to facilitate a “thick description ... when various perspectives are entertained” (Demasure & Müller 2006:418). The fact that post-foundationalist rationality “thus enables us to shuttle in the space between modernity and post-modernity: the space of interpreted experience and communicative praxis which enables praxial critique, articulation, and disclosure” (Van Huyssteen 1999: 139) facilitates a circular movement between practice-theory-practice, which is not foreign to other accents in the hermeneutical development in practical theology (Browning 1991:34; Gerkin 1986:54; Müller 1996:4-5; Viau 1999:86-89). In negotiating the meaning of these perspectives some co-ordinates will be mapped out to portray the meaning of an embodied spiritual anthropology. In the description between interwoven contexts of practice and theory, the traveller on this new road will be expected to discover that

[i]t is the body that makes spiritual experience passionate, that brings to it intense desire and pleasure, pain, delight, and remorse. Without all these things, spirituality is bland. In the world’s spiritual traditions, sex and art and music and dance and the taste of food have been for millennia forms of spiritual experience just as much as ritual practice, meditation, and prayer (Lakoff & Johnson 1999:568).

Considering the meaning of the above for the articulation of a spiritual embodied anthropology, the following perspectives are given.

4.1 An “embodied soul” anthropology/spirituality requires a particular view of God informing a new identity

In the development of science, a reciprocal influence between concepts that describe God and an anthropological description (Webster 2003:219) must be accounted for (Soskice 2001:75). Regarding the reciprocal relationship in the formulation of possible alternatives, Du Toit (2006:1259) states that

God concepts change as the notion of humans as images of God changes ... God's image as described in divine revelation is expounded by science in the terminology of genetic mapping, cognitive science and socio-biology.

If one takes the perspectives presented in the research seriously, one avoids “an abstract *imago Dei*” (Stone 2006:1147) and discovers that

[T]he image of God is not found in some intellectual or spiritual capacity, but in the whole embodied human being, “body and soul”. In fact, the image of God is not found in humans, but is the human, and for this reason *imago Dei* can be read only as *imitatio Dei*: to be created in God's image means we should act like God, and so attain holiness by caring for others and for the world (Van Huyssteen 2006:320).

In contrast to a dogmatological anthropology, a pastoral anthropology is about understanding the human being in her/his recovery (therapy) as well as accompanying her/him in her/his search for meaning in life (Louw 1999:156). The perspectives on an “embodied soul”, when negotiated for pastoral care, will emphasise that one's identity will be understood in terms of one's body as a so-called “bodily identity” (Murphy 2006:141), thereby highlighting a positive perception and experience of the body (Ganzevoort & Veerman 2000:90). In a description of a pastoral anthropology this implies that corporeality “confronts us with the realities of vulnerability and affliction ...; exactly this vulnerability is deeply embedded in our bodily existence” (Van Huyssteen 2006:320).

For this reason and, in particular, for the purposes of describing a possible “embodied soul” pastoral anthropology, aspects of the so-called eschatological theologians in pastoral care are and will be important (Lester 1995:23). Among other things, this enables one to reflect on a theme such as the resurrection and how it could further be filled with pastoral meaning as “not re-clothing of a ‘naked’ soul with a (new) body, but rather restoring the whole person to life — a new transformed kind of life” (Murphy 2006:23).

4.2 An “embodied soul” anthropology/spirituality recognises relationship networks

In a pastoral “embodied soul” anthropology one should also emphasise the human being as a relational being, because “our bodies constitute the very possibility of engagement with one another in this world or any other” (Murphy 2006:140). This is indeed necessary if we accept that what is presupposed is the traditional meaning of “soul”, “the quality of positions and attitudes that people take within the dynamic network of relationships” (Louw 2005:18). To illustrate how this meaning can suit an “embodied soul” anthropology, one can take cognisance, among other things, of research on emotional intelligence (Goleman 2004) and social intelligence (Goleman 2006) in which the neurological substratum of human behaviour is acknowledged. These aspects, which account for the biological-neurological, should therefore be part of a comprehensive description of a pastoral anthropology for use in, among other things, pastoral therapy.

The travelling co-ordinates represent markers for ethical reflection, which must be considered for further research in pastoral care. The words of Lakoff and Johnson (1999:566) could guide the formulation of such an implication:

An embodied spirituality requires an aesthetic attitude to the world that is central to self-nurturance, to the nurturance of others, and to the nurturance of the world itself ... It requires pleasure, joy in the bodily connection with earth and air, sea and sky, plants and animals — and the recognition that they are all more than human, more than any human could ever achieve. Embodied spirituality is more than spiritual experience. It is an ethical relationship to the physical world.

The practical implication of the embodied spirituality described above would be the reconsideration of perspectives on sexuality. Shuman (2005:405) contextualises these perspectives, acknowledging that

[w]e cannot learn properly to value the gift of sexual love and so learn to be good and faithful lovers, until we learn to be good and faithful friends; we cannot be good and faithful friends until we understand that our friendship with each other is fully established and perfected by our being made friends of God.

4.3 “Spirituality goes to work”: Some practical implications for an “embodied” anthropology /spirituality

With good cause, one can concur with, among others, Du Toit (2006:1257) that, as part of a post-foundational practical theology as described above, different contexts need to be taken into account. For example, in their book *Philosophy in the flesh. The embodied mind and its challenge to Western thought* Lakoff and Johnson (1999:568) have illustrated the importance of recognising the development of language and rationality out of corporeality:

The vehicle by which we are moved in passionate spirituality is metaphor. The mechanism of such metaphor is bodily. It is a neural mechanism that recruits our abilities to perceive, to move, to feel, and to envision in the service not only of theoretical and philosophical thought, but of spiritual experience.

In discussing perspectives for an embodied spirituality flowing from corporeality, special attention is paid to mediating meaning “between religious tradition and the need and challenges of a particular society” (Spohn 2005:283). In order to illustrate this one must enter the domain of an embodied spirituality in the business world. This would also be congruent within the proposed boundaries of a post-foundational practical theology arguing for an understanding that not only includes the local context, but for a much deeper and richer understanding that can only develop within and from a local context (Müller 2005:74).

Traditionally, the understanding of spirituality is confined to the personal domains of qualities of the human spirit such as love, humour and happiness while business is usually concerned with economic and social realities such as economic opportunity, increased market share, profits and competitive advantage.

Coherent with the development of an anthropological study of spirituality which recognises that “spirituality is a universal human concern that is significant for the human enterprise as a whole” (Schneiders 2005:27), the emphasis is on the evolving field of recognising the importance of spirituality within the workplace (Guillory 2001; Tipping 2004; Marques, Dhiman & King 2007). In this endeavour towards an “engaged spirituality”, a unifying dimension is found in which spiritual practitioners link transcendent meaning to their mundane worlds of everyday life (Coleman 2005:299). An example of this engagement would be if attention were paid to the fact that globally business is enduring corporate scandals such as Enron, Worldcom, Parmalat and other high-profile cases in which the need for ethical and moral development was illustrated (Maak & Pless 2006:1), giving rise to the description of “Spirituality as the basis of responsible leaders and responsible companies” (Pruzan & Miller 2006:68-91).

In the description of this possible spiritual discernment for the workplace (Benefiel 2005:50-5) concepts such as emotional intelligence (Goleman 2004),

social intelligence (Goleman 2006) and moral intelligence (Lennick & Kiel 2008) would, among other things, play important roles. These concepts are directly linked to the anatomical working of the brain. Lennick & Kiel (2008:30) rightly indicate that “fMRI technology is now being used to chart the unique parts of the brain involved in our moral (and emotional and social) intelligence.”

Van Huyssteen (2006:276) rightly points out that:

[t]o exist as a human being is to be a body-in-the world. In fact, the human body is the vehicle for being in the world, and having a body is to be interactively involved with a definite environment, and we are conscious of the world only through the medium of our body. More specifically, the body is our general medium for having a world, and as embodied conscious the human body is a focal point of living meanings ...

The implications of these perspectives for an “embodied soul” anthropology/spirituality for the business world will obviously still have to be reflected upon in appropriate models of pastoral care so that

... a way of speaking about the reality of God and God’s will for the world ... is intellectually valid in the marketplace of ideas and morally effective in the marketplace of goods and services (Koopman 2003:7).

5. CONCLUSION

The spatial aspects articulated in this research are valuable for embodying practical theological perspectives for an embodied anthropology and spirituality. This obviously has far-reaching implications for the traditional dichotomy between brain (body) and soul and its implications not only for pastoral anthropology, but also for a pastoral spirituality.

In order to describe an embodied anthropology and spirituality, an evolutionary epistemology is needed (Van Huyssteen 2006:75) with the emphasis on contextuality. The present research has pointed out the limits of such a potential epistemology and provided an outline of theology as a context-sensitive discipline, the task of which is “amongst others, to take cognisance of results in the natural sciences, to interpret it, and then to place it within a particular cultural context” (Buitendag 2004:65).

In my opinion, the value of this research is the (re)discovery of “the biological roots of human rationality and the shared epistemic resources and problem-solving abilities of our various research strategies” in which the researcher, also in pastoral theology, receive freedom to escape from “being the fideistic prisoners of these research traditions” (Van Huyssteen 1998:162). In re-evaluating the biological accent and the meaning thereof for a possibly broader pastoral

anthropology and spirituality, “a safe kind of epistemological space” is entered in order “to step beyond the limitations and boundaries of our own religious and disciplinary contexts” (Van Huyssteen 1988:xviii). The image of the praying man holding his heart in his hands depicts the intimate relationship between body and soul, but also metaphorically points to an embodied spiritual understanding, which recognises that even the market economy has its limits and that “religion will always have a role in identifying those limits and calling people to the fuller meaning of human life” (Ahner 2007:236). This places a new emphasis on incarnating and moulding a particular view of human beings and their social relationships and contexts.

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<i>Trefwoorde</i>	<i>Keywords</i>
Antropologie	Anthropology
Spiritualiteit	Spirituality
Liggaam	Body
Siel	Soul
Epistemologie	Epistemology
Pastoraat	Pastoral Care