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Dignity and pneuma

Social-cultural analysis in pastoral care and counselling

topics:
- *theological anthropology*
- *hermeneutics of pastoral care and counselling*
- *from individualistic to a systemic understanding of pastoral care*
- *methods of cultural analysis*
- *a model for practising intercultural counselling*
- *African spirituality*

Abstract

Inculturation in pastoral care requires a paradigm shift within theological anthropology. In order to move from an individualistic approach to a more systemic approach, a pneumatological perspective on being human is proposed. Hermeneutics in pastoral care implies an understanding of the interconnectedness of life issues. It is argued that such an approach links with African spirituality. In order to put theory (a theological anthropology) into practice, a social and cultural diagram for making a pastoral diagnosis is developed. It is imperative that such a model should take several existential dimensions and structural components into consideration. The application of this model to the practice of cross-cultural counselling should enhance the relevancy and efficiency of pastoral care.

It is inevitable that a theological and pastoral approach to the theme of human dignity should meet the urgent need for a design of an anthropology for care and counselling. Immediately the following question surfaces: what is meant by human dignity in terms of a theological understanding of our being human?

Our basic assumption in the design of an anthropology for pastoral care and counselling is that, theologically speaking, one should opt for a pneumatological approach rather than for merely a christological approach. The reason for such a presupposition is that a pneumatological model for a pastoral anthropology assesses human dignity in terms of the Biblical ethos as related to the so called fruits of the spirit. It also links with the spiritual Dimension of our being human.

The basic hypothesis I want to argue is that, unless a theological anthropology is linked to a hermeneutical and systemic approach, it runs into the danger of becoming isolated from important cultural and contextual issues. The danger in a theological anthropology is that it can become so identified with the very individualistic paradigm of Western thinking that it runs into the danger of becoming irrelevant for a culture which thinks in terms of the interconnectedness of life. Thus the argument that a pneumatological approach broadens the vision of a theological anthropology and dovetails with a systemic approach.

The article will be divided into the following main components: the need for an anthropology in pastoral care; a metaphorical and hermeneutical approach in a theology of pastoral care; the human person viewed as "pneuma"; the pastoral encounter and contextualisation/inculturation: the making of a social-cultural analysis in pastoral care and counselling.

The need for an anthropology in pastoral care

It must be admitted that the concept "anthropology" and the notion of a "doctrine of persons" are, as such, foreign to Scripture. The latter deals with different perspectives on our being human. It does not unfold a systematic description of the nature of human beings. By "a pastoral anthropology" is not meant such a systematic description or theological theory. Its purpose is to reflect on the significance of our relationship with God and its possible consequences for interpreting humanity.

Reasons for a pastoral anthropology

It could be argued that the need for an anthropology in pastoral care stems from theodicy and the experience in pastoral ministry that exposure to suffering poses two main questions: "Who am I?" (What is meant by humanity and personal identity? What is the significance of our human life?); and: "Who is God?" (the appropriateness of different God-images within different contexts and their significance to our human misery).

My argument will be that these two questions compel pastoral care to undertake a paradigm shift, moving from the traditional "soul care" to a much broader undertaking: "faith care within the contextuality of life care." Furthermore, these contribute to what can be called a "hermeneutics of pastoral care." Hermeneutics then refers to the understanding of different narratives and life stories within the existential reality of pain, suffering, anxiety, guilt and despair, as well as our human need for meaning, hope, liberation, care and compassion. Although the scope of pastoral care is much broader than the realm of suffering, suffering poignantly exposes two important dimensions of our being: the dimension of *identity* (who am I?) and the *transcendent* dimension of our human existence (what is meant by human destiny, the ultimate concern and how do these concepts link with the concept, "God"?). A hermeneutics of pastoral care is therefore engaged in the challenge to link the significance of human life to an understanding of God which enhances meaning in suffering. A pastoral anthropology should therefore try to meet the challenge of how to reflect on God while simultaneously contributing to a more just and caring human society.

However, it must be admitted that the interest for a theological anthropology has been caused by other factors too. In his book, *Anthropologie in Theologischer Perspektive*, W. Pannenberg points out that contemporary philosophical issues urge one to reflect on a theological anthropology.[1] To be frank, postmodernity's quest for human identity within relativity, plurality, globalisation and a fragmented society, forces one to reflect anew on the issue of being human.

According to Pannenberg the main reason for such a reflection is that Christian theology is engaged in the question regarding the salvation of human beings ("die Heilsfrage des Menschen").[2] Healing and wholeness is not only on the agenda of postmodernity. It is predominantly a question for the Christian faith.

Furthermore, theological issues such as the notion of the suffering God *(theologia crucis)* and the incarnation, force pastoral theology to reflect on the meaning of human identity. Pannenberg identifies this motif (incarnation) as the main theological reason for reflection on the doctrine of persons.[3]

The danger in a pastoral anthropology is to become so spellbound by our being human (the issue of personal identity) and the contemporary quest for justice and humanity (anthropocentrism) that the relationship with God becomes irrelevant. The danger is to become so psychological and contextualized that the notion of God is just a pious afterthought. To avoid this danger, the categories "pneuma" and "spiritual direction" should be introduced as an indication that our reflection tries to combine the quest for humanity and meaning with the problem of metaphorical and hermeneutical theology: the naming of God and the influence of God-images on our self-understanding, identity and Christian spirituality.

Another danger in a design of a pastoral anthropology is that all attention is given to God, while our quest for identity and humanity is being ignored. One must admit that, although a Christian anthropology is theonomous, it should not become so God-centered that the danger of "theocentrism" lurks. A biblical approach is not there to "safeguard" God, but to disclose our human identity *before God (coram Deo).* It should focus on the salvation of human beings in order to restore their humanity within the network of relationships as well as within the contextuality of environmental issues. In this regard Hall's assertion is most helpful: "A religious Tradition whose very *Theos* is other-centered cannot be described adequately as a theocentric tradition".[4] The God of the biblical faith is fundamentally creation-oriented (geocentric) and human-oriented (anthropocentric). "To the God-orientation of repentant humanity there corresponds a human-orientation of the gracious God."[5]

Another reason for a pastoral anthropology is the praxis of ministry. It is, to a certain extent, a functional reason. Pastoral ministry is not only about faith and God. It is indeed about the function of human relations within contexts. This is the reason why our approach for a pastoral anthropology can be described as a "functional anthropology", i.e., an anthropology which does not solely focus on the nature of human beings, but on their conduct and function as well. Furthermore, by

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[1] See W. Pannenberg, *Anthropologie in Theologischer Perspektive* (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), p. 12.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[4] D. J. Hall, *Professing the Faith Christian: Theology in a North American Context.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 346.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 346.

"functional anthropology" is meant the relevancy of the Christian faith with regard to identity, maturity and burning existential issues such as anxiety, guilt and despair.

Pastoral care as a theological discipline

Pastoral care and pastoral theology are those disciplines within a practical theology which are engaged with what traditionally has been called *cura animarum* – the care of souls. As part of practical theology, pastoral care deals with God's involvement with our being human and our spiritual journey through life. Essentially, it is engaged with the human search for meaning and our quest for significance, purposefulness and humanity.

As a theological discipline, pastoral care focuses on the meaning of such concepts as care, help and comfort from the perspective of the Christian faith. It deals with the process of communicating the Gospel and the encounter and discourse between God and persons. This encounter is based on the notion of stewardship and the covenantal partnership between God and human beings.

In the past, pastoral care commuted between either a *theological reduction* (the basic anthropological problem is human sin – thus the need for redemption) or a *psychological reduction* (the basic anthropological problem is blocked, inner potentialities - thus the need for self-realization). What had been understood by pastoral care was often more psychotherapy within a Christian context than spiritual direction or *cura animarum.*

A bipolar approach in pastoral care is an attempt to work with the principle of mutuality and correlation. God *and* human beings, theology and psychology, pastoral care *and* the human sciences should, therefore, not operate separately, opposing one another, but in terms of a more integrative approach. Nevertheless, pastoral care should maintain its distinctive character, namely *as cura animarum, i.e.,* the care for people's spiritual needs. Our assumption is that care is a theological issue and should be interpreted in terms of an *eschatological perspective* [6].

By "eschatology" is not meant in the first place a doctrine regarding the temporary "end" of time and history. Eschatology is connected to the notion of salvation (Heil) and refers to the essential quality and status of our new being in Christ.[7] An eschatological perspective interprets human beings in terms of the event of Christ's death and resurrection. It reckons with the new *aeon.* Recreation determines the direction and destination of creation. The implication of such an es-

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[6] K. M. Woschitz (*De Homine* [Graz: Verlag Styria, 1984]) gives a thorough description of different perspectives on our being human. His finding is that in Christian theology the perspective of faith dominates. "Im Glauben an das offenbarende Wort weiss sich der Mensch gleichsam von 'oben' gedeutet und erleuchtet sowie vom Soll des Glaubens beansprucht. Die christliche Existenzweise ist Glaubensexistenz und der Glaube ein geschichtliches 'Prinzip,' d..i. das, woher, worin und woraufhin sich das Leben vollzieht. Er hat sein geschichtliches Unterpfand in Jesus Christus" (p. 283).

[7] J. Moltmann, "Theologie im Projekt der Moderne" (*Evangelische Theologie 55,* no. 5 (1995), pp.402-415): "Christliche Eschatologie hat jedoch mit solchem apokalyptischen 'Endlösungen' nichts zu tun denn ihr Thema ist gar nicht 'das Ende,' sondern vielmehr die Neuschöpfung aller Dinge. Christliche Eschatologie ist die erinnerte Hoffnung der Auferweckung des gekreuzigten Christus und spricht darum von neuen Anfangen im tödlichen Ende." (p.12)

chatological approach in theology is that reality is assessed in terms of the already and not yet of God's coming Kingdom. Grace defines the essence of our being and the character of humanity. Spiritual direction is then viewed as the outcome of a dynamic and vital hope which encompasses more than visual perception. It reckons with the transcendent dimension of the Christian faith, i.e., the faithfulness of God.

A metaphorical and hermeneutical approach in a theology of pastoral care

Because of the influence of metaphorical theology, pastoral care should be interpreted more and more in a hermeneutical paradigm than in a kerygmatic or homiletic paradigm. It becomes clear that the pastoral encounter is not merely about proclamation and admonition. Pastoral care is about communication, trying to establish a relationship of trust and empathy through listening skills. But, as a theological science, pastoral care is more than communication. At stake is the discourse of the Gospel and the narrative of salvation. Pastoral care should therefore maintain its theological character. In order to do this, a pastoral hermeneutics of care and counselling should deal with the naming of God and religious experiences which refer to spirituality and the ultimate.

A hermeneutics of pastoral care deals with the interpretation of the presence of God within human relationships and social contexts. It also tries to interpret existential issues from the perspective of the Christian faith. Central to a hermeneutical approach in pastoral care is dealing with different metaphors which reveal God's compassion and care. Hence the importance of Godimages and the interpretation of experiences of faith. In short, a pastoral hermeneutics of care and counselling is about religious experiences which give an indication of believers' perception of God and their Interpretation of the significance of their existence; hence the quest for spirituality in a pastoral strategy for counselling. The outcome of such focus on spirituality should hopefully shed some new light on the very important issue of the interplay between a Christian faith and the current quest for human rights and humanity.

Traditionally, the different functions of pastoral care have been described as: *healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciliation* and *nurturing.* Within the framework of a hermeneutics of pastoral care, a sixth one must be added: *interpretation and diagnosis / assessment.* Hence the challenge to a pastoral hermeneutics to deal with metaphors which portray God. Such a portrayal in pastoral theology must not be understood in terms of a dogmatic model (to systematize information about God in a rational way), but to understand God in relation to contextual issues and suffering (to interpret crises and problematic/painful events with the aid of experiences of faith which refer to God).

When employing a metaphorical approach in pastoral theology, one should be aware of the underlying assumption that all reference to God is indirect. "No words or phrases refer directly to God, for God-language can refer only through the detour of a description that probably belongs elsewhere."[8] Metaphors refer to a non-literal, indirect and figurative way of speech without denying the reality and the ontological quality of that which they denote.

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[8] See S. McFague, *Models of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), p. 34.

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Hick makes a distinction between metaphorical and literal speech. The latter refers to meaning in a lexicographical sense. "Metaphorical" is derived from the Greek *metaphorein*, to transfer. There is a transfer of meaning – the unknown is explained in terms of the known. One term is illuminated by attaching to it some of the associations of another, so that the metaphor is "that trope, or figure of speech, in which we speak of one thing in terms suggestive of another."[9] Hick further argues that metaphors serve to promote communication and a sense of community.

Theology may be defined in many ways. The most famous definition, without doubt, is that of Anselm of Canterbury: *fides quaerens intellectum,* faith seeking understanding. Within the current demand for dialogue and communication, theology should be supplemented by the notion of: *fides quaerens verbum,* faith seeking ways of saying, or more precisely, ways of discoursing.[10]

Theology needs both: understanding and communication. But then, understanding is not the *intellectus* of speculative rationality, but that understanding which entails different experiences of God. Understanding is a process of contextual interpretation, not of rational explanation. Theological and pastoral communication is more than merely interpreting and denoting messages. Pastoral communication entails communion, fellowship,[11] i.e., that kind of communication where people can experience the presence of God as a space for intimacy and unconditional love. And that is exactly what spiritual direction in pastoral care is about. It focuses on our human disposition. But, by doing so, human behaviour and human acts become increasingly important. This is the reason for a third supplementation: theology is indeed practical and is seeking ways of "appropriate doing." Meaningful and just actions become important. Theology must therefore be supplemented by the following formula: *fides quaerens actum* – faith seeking ways of right/just doing/action.

A pastoral hermeneutics, as a theological discipline, could be defined in terms of Tracy's description of theology as "the discipline that articulates mutually critical correlation between the meaning and truth of an interpretation of the Christian faith and the meaning and truth of an interpretation of the contemporary situation."[12] Both practical and pastoral theology are involved in a communication process which should result in concrete and meaningful *actions of faith (fides quaerens actum)*. The challenge to pastoral theology thus is to develop an anthropological theory for human transformation and direction which reckons with existential contexts. It should also try to assess the existential value of God-images and deal with the interplay between God-images and our human self-understanding.

The implication of our argument for designing a theological anthropology is that the naming of God in pastoral care is essentially an existential concern. Very aptly

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9 See J. Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press [1985]), p. 54, cited in Hick, *The Metaphor of God-Incarnate* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminister, 1993), p. 99.

10 See M. Viau, *Perspectives on Practical Theologies and Methodologies,* Unpublished paper read at the International Academy of Practical Theology, Seoul, Korea (April 1997), p. 4.

11 L. Benze (Die Kirche als Kommunikation [Zsambek/Hungary, 1996], p. 2) describes the inner structure of the church in terms of communication. "Kirche als jene Semiogenese." Without communication, the church loses its identity. "Nimmt man die Kommunikation aus der christlichen Theologie heraus, bleibt kein einziges Dogma, überhaupt nichts."

12 See D. Tracy, "The Foundations of Practical Theology", in: *Practical Theology,* ed. D. Browning (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), p. 62.

Braaten remarks as follows: "The question of God arises out of the human quest for meaning; it is, thus a structural dimension of human existence. Statements and symbols about God function to answer questions concerning the nature and destiny of human existence."[13] Pastoral theology is not a theology "from above", but a theology "from below". Braaten[14] calls it the existential locus of God-language.

Although being a sociologist, P. L. Berger pleaded in his now famous book, *A Rumor of Angels,*[15] for that kind of awareness of transcendency which can contribute to joyful play – the human being as *humo ludens.* "In openness to the signals of transcendence the true proportions of our experience are rediscovered. This is the comic relief of redemption, it makes it possible for us to laugh and to play with a new fullness."[16]

A pastoral hermeneutics which is concerned with spiritual direction is an attempt to rediscover "signals of transcendence" which create hope and joy on an extential level. This attempt should deal with the overall new theological agenda posed by postmodernity: "…how can the Christian faith be made intelligible amid an emerging postmodern consciousness that, although driven by a thirst for both individual and cosmic wholeness, still affirms and extends such modem themes as evolutionary progress, future consciousness, and individual freedom?"[17]

The implication of a hermeneutical and relational model is that it deals with the notion of interconnectedness and the systemic nature of the human environment. "It declares that in the Christian understanding the most significant thing to be said about being, is that it is integrated whole, interconnected, not fragmented, but delicately interrelated, ecological, relational."[18] A relational model implies that being, in all its aspects and manifestations, is relational. This is what Hall calls "the ontology of communion."[19] This means that the meaning question is linked to the ontological assumption of the inter-relatedness - the integrity - of all that is. "It means, further, that the ethic which emanates from this system of meaning is directed toward the restoration of broken relationships. To state it once more in a single theorem: For the Tradition of Jerusalem *being means being-with.*"[20] An ontology of communion and an understanding of humanity as co-humanity should, therefore, inevitably result in what I want to call "an anthropology of responsibility": *respondeo ergo sum.* This notion of *respondeo* and the understanding of humans *as being-with,* compels us to develop a diagnostic model for making an analysis of our being human in terms of social and cultural issues.

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[13] See C. E. Braaten, "The Problem of God-language Today," in: *Our Naming of God: Problems and Prospects of God-talk Today,* ed. C. E. Braaten. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 11-33, p. 20.

[14] *Ibid.,* p. 19.

[15] See P. L. Berger, *A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* (New York: Doubleday, 1969), p. 121.

[16] *Ibid.,* p. 75.

[17] See T. Peters, *God - The World's Future: Systemic Theology for a Postmodern Era* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), p. 6.

[18] D. J. Hall, *Professing the Faith* (op. cit.), p. 317.

[19] *Ibid.,* p. 304.

[20] *Ibid.,* p. 3 2 1.

The human person viewed as "pneuma"

In the past the classic point of departure for a theological anthropology was always the notion: our creatureliness (creaturehood) and its connection to the concept, "the image of God." The latter should not be ignored. However, our starting point for a pastoral anthropology is the Old Testament's notion of *nefesh* (spiritual life) and the Pauline expression, the human being as a spiritual being, *pneuma*. *Pneuma* then refers to our spiritual relationship with God and to the new being in Christ. Christian spirituality should, therefore, reflect the eschatological stance of human beings, i.e., our being recreated in the image of Christ and baptized in the Spirit. *Pneuma* refers to the transformation from "death" to "life" (resurrection) (Rom 6:4-21). We have been justified by faith (Rom 5: 1) and should now live a life guided by the Spirit of God. We have been saved in hope (Rom 8:24-25). Spiritual direction should thus explore the connection between hope and our being a "spiritual person."

Pneuma is often used as an alternate term to imply human existence in terms of an inner dimension and an awareness of the ultimate. Paul accentuates the term *pneuma* when he links human existence to our new salvific condition in Christ and to the reality of resurrected life. This link between the human *pneuma* and the work of the Godly *pneuma* is prominent in Romans 8:16. Because of this connection between the human spirit and the work of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 1:22, 5:5; Rom 8:23), the non-believer cannot possess *pneuma*. Hence, the importance of Guthrie's statement: "In the Christian doctrine of man the central idea is not psyche but *pneuma*. In Paul's exposition of it he modifies the Old Testament emphasis on *nefesh* (LXX: *psyche*) and switches to *pneuma* because he at once considered man from the viewpoint of his experience of Christ."[21]

In the light of the previous argument, we can present the following thesis for the founding of a pastoral anthropology: as a result of the Christological basis of a person's new being and the pneumatological interaction between God and the human spirit, the notion of a person as a pneumatic being should play a decisive role in a theological anthropology. The dimension of pneuma in the new person describes a total new condition and submission, transformation and focus upon God. Such a person is moved and motivated by God in a way that transforms the person's volition and thoughts and enables the person to experience new life each day.

According to 1 Corinthians 2:11-12, God transforms the human *pneuma* to such an extent that people realize what God has given them through his grace.[22] 1 Corinthians 2:15 thus speaks of a spiritual person who can judge life from the new spiritual perspective, that is, from the teachings of the Holy Spirit (v.13). These teachings correlate with those represented in Christ's Person and Spirit (v. 16). We may thus conclude that the human *pneuma* attains a new dimension through rebirth. It describes a new focus on God, and a new submission to Him. This transformation imparts new meaning to the human spirit. The pneumatic focus makes

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[21] See D. Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Leceister/Illinois: Inter-Varsity, 1981), p. 165.

[22] See W. Russel's remark ("The Apostle Paul's View of the 'Sin Nature'/'New Nature' Struggle", in: *Christian Perspectives on Being Human: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Integration,* eds. J. P. Moreland & D. M. Ciocchi (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1993), p. 226: "Rather than a divided self, distraught over an internal battle between flesh and Spirit, Paul pictures a new self, emboldened by the liberating work of the Holy Spirit and a vibrant community, with others of like identity."

humans dependent on the transcendental dimension of their Christian life; that is, on the eschatological salvific reality. Their lives in future will be qualitatively determined by this salvific dimension. The Holy Spirit addresses people in their inner being (soul). The new person's *pneuma* can thus be described as a point of connectedness or point of mediation for continual spiritual growth and the development of Christian faith. As a result of the work of God's Spirit, an association emerges in the *pneuma* of the new person between the believer and Christ (the indwelling presence of God) (Gal 2:20).

This pneumatological point of contact for an encounter between God and the human spirit is significant. It indicates that the continuity between the earthly and the eschatological life is not situated in inner psychic abilities, but only in the faithfulness of God and in his transforming actions through the renewing power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit in our hearts acts as the security deposit and guarantee (2 Cor 1:22).

A person whose life is qualified as "spirit" *(pneuma)* lives from the Godly qualification of life, and has been transformed to be totally dependent on God's grace. This new person's dependence on God is emphasized by the pneumatic dimension of human existence. Barth calls this God-centered dimension of human life: *pneuma;* God's impact upon his creation; God's movement to people.[23]

The human *pneuma* is thus the center of a Christian's understanding or personality.

- On the one hand it labels the person as an individual, subject and conscious being, who is totally dependent on God. The *pneuma* constitutes and constructs the *psuché* as a religious and moral being with personal identity. The *pneuma* of the new person endows the *psuché / sarx / soma* with an eschatological identity: one now lives from God's grace and promises. *Pneuma* views the human being from an eschatological perspective, i.e., a person is understood in terms of his/her new being and status in Christ.

- On the other hand it defines the human being as *more* than a mere individual. The eschatological perspective views a person in terms of a "corporate personality": the status of all believers in Christ as expressed in mutual fellowship *(koinonia).*

The burning question for our overhead topic is now the following: How can one transfer this theological perspective on our being human and the corporate dimension of life, into a practical model for making a pastoral diagnosis?

The pastoral encounter and contextualization/inculturation :

The making of a social-cultural analysis in pastoral care and counselling

"Encounter" does not describe a relationship between a personal God and an isolated individual. When seen in terms of the Gospel's covenantal framework, "en-

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[23] See Barth, *Die Lehre von der Schöpfung*, Kirchliche Dogmatik 111/2 (Zollikon-Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1948), p. 425.

counter" implies a network of relationships, reciprocal interaction and associations. The pastoral encounter implies a system of "inter-connectedness".

Graham, referring to Augsburger's use of the term "interpathy", is convinced that a systems approach is important when pastoral care moves into a cross-cultural situation.[24] "Interpathy is an intentional cognitive envisioning and affective experiencing of another's thoughts and feelings, even though the thoughts rise from another process of knowing, the values grow from another frame of moral reasoning, and the feelings spring from another basis of assumptions."[25]

Bosch also refers to the importance of the process of inculturation.[26] Inculturation does not focus on accommodation or adaptation to a certain culture, but on a "regional or macro contextual and macrocultural manifestation."[27] Inculturation implies an inclusive, all embracing comprehensive approach.[28] In a certain sense, inculturation aims at being a form of incarnation: "the gospel being 'en-fleshed', 'embodied' in a people and its culture…"[29] This process of inculturation implies further that different theologies and approaches enrich each other within a systemic approach to the pastoral encounter. Bosch claims that we are not only involved with inculturation (the contextual manifestation), but also with interculturation (the interdependent relationship between different cultures for mutual enrichment).[30] In the light of the recent development of ethnopsychology, Hesselgrave advocates that the area of missionary work needs to be re-thought in terms of "enculturation" and "acculturation", using what he calls a "cross-cultural missionary psychology."[31] In future, the pastoral encounter and diagnosis must take note of a systemic and cultural context. For instance, a systems approach would be important in a situation where group bonding (family, tribe) is a primary value.

Graham, believes that a systems approach in the pastoral encounter implies a new way of thinking.[32] He calls this "systemic thinking" which is a view about the universe, or a picture of reality, affirming that everything that exists is in an ongoing mutual relationship with every other reality. For Augsburger, a systemic perspective means an inclusive process of relationships and interactions: "System is a structure in process; that is, a pattern of elements undergoing patterned events. The human person is a set of elements undergoing multiple processes in cyclical

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[24] See L. K. Graham, *Care of Persons, Care of Worlds: A Psychosystems Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992), pp. 19-20.

[25] See Augsburger, *Pastoral Counselling Across Cultures* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986) p. 29.

[26] See D. J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), p. 452.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 453.

[28] J. M. Waliggo et al. (eds.) *(Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency* [Kampala: St Paul Publications, 1986], p. 11) point out the different concepts used to describe the process of identification between Christianity and different cultures. *Adaptation* implies a selection of certain rites and customs, purifying them and inserting them within Christian rituals which have any apparent similarity. Then *indigenization:* this refers to the necessity of promoting indigenous church ministers. *Reformulation* refers to the Christian doctrine and understanding of God in the thought and language that are understood by local people. *Incarnation* is used to reveal the humane character of the Gospel and Christ's identification with cultural issues. According to Waliggo, *inculturation* underlines the importance of culture as the instrument and means for realizing the incarnation process of the Christian religion and the reformation of Christian life and doctrine in the very thought-patterns of different cultures.

[29] *Ibid.,* p. 454.

[30] *Ibid.,* p. 456.

[31] See D. J. Hesselgrave, *Counselling Cross-culturally* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), p. 39.

[32] See Graham, *Care of Persons, Care of Worlds* (op. cit.), p. 40.

patterns as a coherent system. Thus a system is a structure of elements related by various processes that are all interrelated and interdependent."[33]

Two factors should be considered during the pastoral encounter in order to understand human problems. Firstly, problems are embedded in cultural contexts in which attitudes, values, customs and rituals play an important role. Secondly, problems may correlate with the position and status which people adopt and hold within a certain network of relationships. Friedman draws attention to the fact that a systems approach focuses less on the *content* and more on the *process*: "less on the cause-and-effect connections that link bits of information and more on the principles of organization that give data meanings."[34] Systemic thinking means that the pastoral encounter not only takes note of the person and psychic composition, but notices especially of the *position* held by a person within a relationship. "The components do not function according to their 'nature' but according to their position in the network."[35]

Graham lists four characteristics of a systemic view of reality.[36]

- It affirms that all elements of the universe are interconnected in an ongoing reciprocal relationship with one another.
- It affirms that reality is organized. The universe is an organized totality, of which the elements are interrelated.
- It emphasizes homeostasis, or balance and self-maintenance. Balance is maintained by transactional processes such as communication, negotiation and boundary management.
- It emphasizes creativity in context, or finite freedom. Although systems are self-maintaining, they are also self-transcending.

In Graham's terms, the implication of a systems approach is that a human being is a "connective person."[37] "The self is not only a network of connections, it is an emerging reality eventuating from those ongoing connections. By definition, the self is the qualitative and unique expression of the psyche, which emerges from reciprocal transactional processes within individuals and between individuals and their environments."[38]

It would seem that a systems approach has implications for a pastoral anthropology. During pastoral encounters, a person is approached as an open system, not as an isolated individual. "The soul is both *activity* of synthesizing and creating experience, and the *outcome of* the process of synthesis and creation."[39]

It is gradually becoming clear that the pastoral encounter and the making of a pastoral diagnosis involves both our spiritual and our existential life. It involves a complex network of relations which should be assessed contextually. The pastoral encounter is a contextual event within a systemic setting.

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[33] See Augsburger, *Pastoral Counselling Across Cultures* (op. cit.), p. 178.
[34] See E. H. Friedman, *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (New York: Guilford, 1985), p. 14.
[35] *Ibid.,* p. 15.
[36] See Graham, *Care of Persons, Care of Worlds* (op. cit.), pp. 39-40.
[37] *Ibid.,* p. 73.
[38] *Ibid.,* p. 78.
[39] *Ibid.,* p. 42.

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Cross-cultural Communication

It is important that when the pastoral encounter is applied in a situation of cross-cultural communication, it should be free from the unilateralisms of an "individualistic" and "private" understanding of human problems.[40] An example of a more holistic and systemic way of thinking is the African philosophy of life. For the African, life is a continuum of cosmic, social and personal events. When one breaks society's moral codes, the universal ties between oneself and the community are also broken. This factor may be the main issue in a person's experience of suffering. It also brings a new dimension to recovery and cure. It is not the individual who has to be cured: it is the broken ties and relationships that need to be healed.

Ancestors play a decisive role within the African societal order and network of relationships. It is often stated, erroneously, that Africans *worship* their ancestors. This is not so. The latter are not gods, but are part of the systemic network of relationships. Ancestors are the protectors of life and of the community. "Africans do believe strongly in the presence and influence of ancestors in daily life, so much so that they do things, often unconsciously, to reflect such a belief, but they do not worship them as gods."[41]

Pastoral care should view an African primarily as a social being who is intimately linked to his/her environment. Systemic concepts have important *anthropological implications*. For example, personality is not a purely psychological concept. In Western psychology, personality usually refers to the self-structure of a person. It is part of the I-nucleus with its conscious and unconscious processes. Personality thus becomes an individual category which reflects the constant factor of typical behavior and personal characteristics. The human being is autonomous and independent.[42]

In contrast, within an African context, personality refers to a dynamic power and a vital energy which allow a person to come into contact with ancestors, God and society. For example, Berinyuu, refers to an Akan tribe who have their own unique view of a person. "The *ntroro* spirit is the energy which links him/her to

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[40] In *Pastoral Care to the Sick in Africa: An Approach to Transcultural Pastoral Theology* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1988), p. 5, A.A. Berinyuu, writes: "In Africa there is no division and/or differentiation between the animate and inanimate, between the spirit and matter, between living and non-living, dead and living, physical and metaphysical, secular and sacred, the body and the spirit, etc. Most Africans generally believe that everything (human beings included) is in constant relationship with one another and with the invisible world, and that people are in a state of complete dependence upon those invisible powers and beings. Hence, Africans are convinced that in the activities of life, harmony, balance or tranquillity must constantly be sought and maintained. Society is not segmented into, for example, medicine, sociology, law, politics and religion. Life is a liturgy of celebration for the victories and/or sacrifices of others."

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[42] Within African life, the community counts for almost everything. The individual is absorbed in the community. The relationship between the two is somewhat like that in a living organism: the single persons are like the limbs of a living body (E. Ackermann, *Cry, Beloved Africa! A Continent Needs Help* [Munich-Kinshasa: African University Studies, 1994], pp. 43-44). The constitutive community in African society consists of a relatively autonomous extended family which depends on marriage and blood relatives. It ties together three to four generations and ancestry. The special duties and rights in every aspect of life are determined by ancestry and the degree of relationship.

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the ancestral lineage."[43]   The human spirit is not regarded as an identifiable self, but as a personal consciousness of powers which is associated with the concept of "destiny". This destiny can be modified, so that one can adapt within circumstances and within a social context.

The above facts shed more light upon Africans' non-analytical approach to life. They do not practice Western-style introspection. Life, with its pain and problems, is accepted without questioning. This approach to life demands much patience and adaptability. As such, it differs vastly from a Western model. The West regards (clock) time and the manipulation of the environment as important. (This does not mean that African rhythm does not also manipulate and often abuse life and nature.) The point to grasp is that, within an African model, time is an *event* and life is an interplay of powers. Life and personality possess dynamic energy within societal relationships. Myth and symbol, ritual and rhythm determine everyday life, and not structures, analyses and solutions.[44] In terms of this view, a person can never be an isolated entity, but is embedded within social and other powers within which the individual has a role to play. A person's role in society determines identity. This is of greater importance than personal qualities and individual needs. Role fulfilment[45] becomes more important than personal self-actualization.

The previous outline of contextualization and inculturation makes it very clear that the assessment of Christian spirituality and the making of a pastoral diagnosis cannot be made without making a social and cultural analysis. A pastoral model for a theological anthropology should therefore always try to determine the interplay between cultural values and our human self-understanding. The cultural context will determine contemporary views on being human. A good example of this is the individualism attached to the achievement ethics of postmodern materialism and capitalism. Another example to prove our argument is the previous brief sketch of an African view on life and the human being.

The following diagram could help the pastor to refine his/her pastoral diagnosis. It functions as a guideline to pose different questions and to control whether the diagnosis deals with the immediate context and reality. It also tries to put a hermeneutical and systemic approach to a pastoral and theological anthropology into practice.

For clarity on the interplay between a social-cultural context and an understanding of our being human, the following structural components should be dealt with. In a cultural[46] and social analysis, these structures shed light on vital questions which

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43 *Ibid.,* p. 10.
44   On the meaning of African spirituality, see A. Bellagamba, "New Attitudes towards Spirituality", in: *Towards African Christian Maturity*, eds. A. Shorter et al. (Kampala: St Paul Publications, 1987), p. 108: "African spirituality is spirit-inspired, life-centered, Gospel-based, creation-celebrating, hope-oriented, people-affirming, joy-filled. It is an incarnated, cosmic and global spirituality."
45   A role does not indicate social position as a result of skills, possessions and professional status, but is a behavioral pattern based on society's expectations. A role is not a matter of choice. The view of the community/tribal community determines the person's role. Social identity therefore creates the person's role.
46   In the various disciplines, there is, generally little consensus on the meaning of "culture." For example, culture could refer to the "social practice" of activities and attitudes. It could even refer to the symbolical level denoting rites, traditions, myths, language, etc. In a more technical sense, it refers to technology and the transformation of creation into a human environment or "Heimat." It could even include the human attempt of understanding him-/herself within the processes of

should be posed in order to obtain a better profile of those factors which influence the process of making a pastoral and anthropological assessment. They are the following:

a) *Existential questions within environmental settings.* These questions embrace issues regarding the meaning of one's life. What are the driving forces and motivational factors behind people's behavior? What are the main objectives and how are they linked to major life issues and philosophical questions? What causes anxiety and what kind of suffering determines a person's outlook? These questions should try to probe painful events which shape current attitudes and important processes of decision-making. Existential questions should also try to obtain clarity regarding the link between our human suffering and the destruction/pollution of our environment.

b) *Belief systems.* Questions should be asked in order to determine how a person, or a group of people, view the quest for the ultimate. The transcendental dimension refers to the important factor of spirituality and religiosity. Belief systems reveal the cultural background of God-images and refer to norms, values and customs which shape basic religious needs and expectations. They also give an indication of concepts used to express experiences of faith.

c) *Societal and communal structures.* An analysis should reveal those structures which determine social and communal behavior. Politics and economics play a crucial role in defining and determining the character of these structures. For example: whether one deals with a democratic, communist, socialist, bureaucratic or autocratic system should be questioned. Are the economics oriented towards an open market system (free enterprise) or are they dominated and regulated by a nationalistic or socialistic ideology? Other important factors are technological development; the communication network; the education system and the legal system.

d) *Language and symbols.* Communal stories should be investigated in order to come to grips with possible existing myths which shape attitudes and thinking. A narrative analysis and linguistics could be of great assistance in this regard. Symbols in language and metaphorical expressions often reveal a culture's "inner soul" and its influence on anthropology.

e) *The dynamics of relationships.* Another area is the important influence of marriage and family structures on human behavior. For example, monogamy has a different influence on sexual values than polygamy. An important area which should be investigated, is that of sexuality (norms and values) and its influence on marriage structures, role fulfilment and family life. Whether one deals with an extended family system or a modem family unit (the private family), will determine the outcome of personal identity (interconnectedness versus privatization and individualization).

f) *The existing ethos.* Ethos refers to morals and basic attitudes regarding diverse life issues. A culture's dominating ethos influences anthropology because it reflects the values and norms which determine personal identity and self-image. The ethos deals with questions relating to what is right or wrong. It also mirrors the
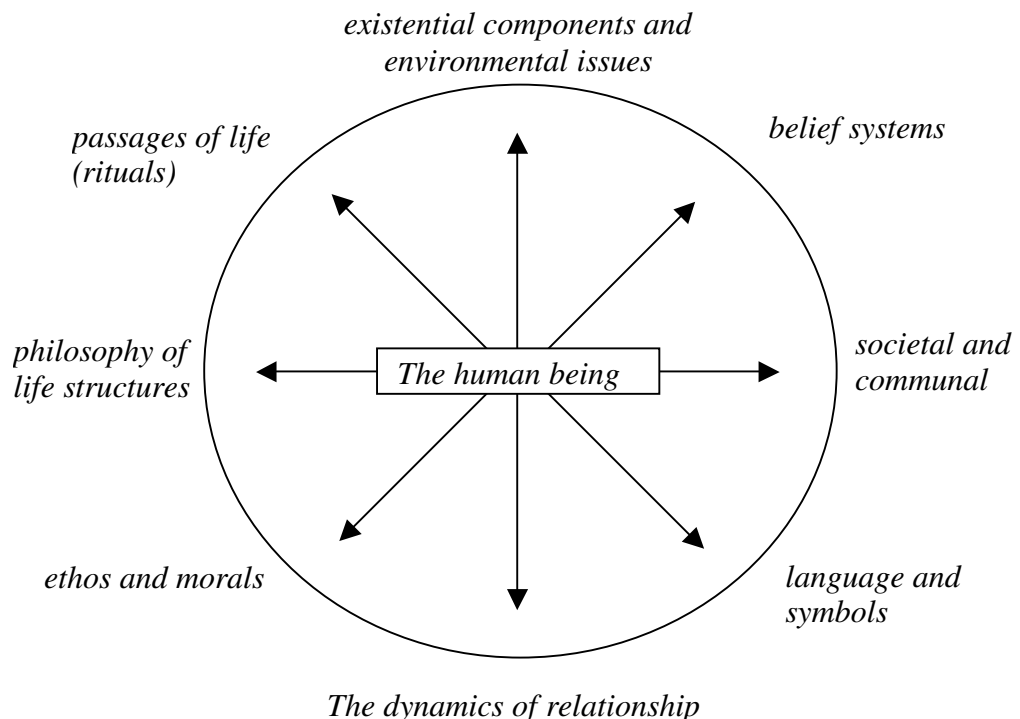
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self-realization in the world. It includes knowledge or the act of knowledge. On the notion of culture as self-realization, see A. R. Crollius, "The Meaning of Culture in Theological Anthropology", in: *Inculturation: Its Meaning and Urgency,* eds. J. M. Waliggo et al. (Kampala: St Paul Publications, 1986), p. 52.

influence of long-standing traditional values (the impact of Tradition on anthropology).

g) *Philosophy of life.* The undergirding view of life, as expressed in different philosophical models, should be determined: for example, whether one deals with a premodern, modern, or postmodern society. What is the existing approach to life: is it religious, rationalistic, scientific, socialistic or capitalistic?

h) *Passages of life and rituals.* Throughout the various stages of life, rituals occur which help people to pass through difficult phases. Rituals are embedded in cultural views and indicate how a person or cultural group deals with important life issues such as birth, festivity, death and grief.

Diagram for Making a Social and Cultural Analysis

existential components and
environmental issues

belief systems

passages of life
(rituals)

The human being

philosophy of
life structures

societal and
communal

ethos and morals

language and
symbols

The dynamics of relationship

Remark: The diagram should be used together with the various models for making an assessment of God-images and the character of religious experiences. The whole notion of understanding our being human and the processes of developing a mature faith and growth in spirituality must be interpreted within the components and structures of the above-mentioned diagram. It helps the pastor to gain a more realistic insight regarding the dynamics of spirituality and contextuality. The value of such a systemic approach to anthropology and spirituality is that it contributes to developing a pastoral hermeneutics of care and counselling which operates within systems and contexts rather than merely with isolated individuals and privatised religiosity.

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Conclusion

A theological anthropology for pastoral care and counselling should deal with a pneumatological perspective. The latter views our being human in terms of *pneuma* .

Pneuma refers to a new state of being which connects humans with the interconnectedness of life events. In order to cope with different situations and crises in life, a Christian understanding of being human is linked to the "charismatic dimension" of spirituality, i.e. the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5: 22-23). The fruit of the Spirit should be embodied and enfleshed within the systematic interrelatedness of human life. In a pastoral diagnosis a systemic approach should take cultural and social issues into consideration in order to enhance our human dignity. With human dignity is then meant the treatment of humans in terms of the most basic gift of the spirit: unconditional love in order to help humans to respond in a responsible manner *(respondeo ergo sum)* and to discover purposefulness. A purposeful life can be fostered in pastoral care on condition that a pastoral hermeneutics is exercised within the parameters of a social and cultural analysis. The latter helps pastoral care to become contextually relevant by putting theory (a pastoral anthropology) into practice.

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