

DANCING WITH UNCERTAINTY - FROM MODERNISM TO POSTMODERNISM IN APPRAISING CHRISTIAN COUNSELLING

BY

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**LIFE IS NOT ABOUT CERTAINTY (OF KNOWLEDGE),
BUT ABOUT TRUST, LOVE AND SERVICE**

**JUST BECAUSE YOU ARE PARANOID IT DOES NOT MEAN
THEY ARE NOT AFTER YOU**

**WHO WILL STATE WHO IS NORMAL AND WHO NOT?
(VAN GOGH)**

**THE THEOLOGICAL AND COUNSELLING ISSUE IS THAT THE
CHURCHES ARE AN INTERIM MEASURE, CHRIST IN HIS
SAVING WORK ON EARTH IS A TRANSITORY FIGURE AND THE
PNEUMATOLOGICAL TASK IS TO RENEW THE WORLD IN ALL
ITS DIMENSIONS AND ENJOY LIFE TO THE FULL TO THE
GLORY OF GOD (COMPARE VAN RULER)**

DEDICATION

- **Dedicated to my beloved deceased parents and my dear brother, who encouraged me towards excellence.**
- **Dedicated to my unique children, special sons-in-law and exuberant grandchildren, with gratitude for your love in my life. Through you God added that extra abundance and variety in my life.**
- **Dedicated to the Willows cell group, with thanks for many fruitful Christian discussions and prayers that provided meaning to my life.**
- **Dedicated to the marginalised communities in South Africa, with whom I have identified throughout my life.**
- **Dedicated to the theological discussion group in Pretoria and personal friends, with appreciation for incisive theological conversations where the seeds of this thesis were sown. It was not blown away in the wind, but the Spirit used it, blowing it where He wishes to go...**

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SUMMARY

The constituent concepts of theology, also practical theology and counselling, have lost much of their previously precise meaning, also by virtue of the growing confusion surrounding what counts as counselling and theology. This crisis has created a lot of uncertainty that this thesis endeavours to counter.

As the defining paradigm inscriptions of the old modern methodological boundary stones have weathered away, any attempt simply to rework traditional counselling and theological problems proves to be a futile venture. Even if the measure of critical consciousness regarding worn-out modernistic concepts has been raised to a maximum height towards renewed initiation and even if the intentions remain unabashedly sincere to move beyond the disintegrating modernistic approaches, they prove to be an ineffective scheme.

The dissertation states courteously, but deliberately that it is not possible to move beyond modern counselling and theology from within modernism. Postmodernism is also not simply a new critical approach barring generalizations, “grand narratives”, objective descriptions and dogmatic statements. Deconstruction, not as a new approach, but rather as opening up new dimensions towards celebrating life, can move beyond modernism towards postmodernism, maintaining reason and logical arguments, and rejecting the slogan “everything goes”. In fact, if you scratch a sceptical relativist, you will expose a ... modernist, as the reverse side of an absolutist conviction. Postmodernism and deconstruction set new differentiated agendas for and redraw new-fangled “maps” of counselling and theology.

The exposure of the different contemporary approaches regarding certainty in modernism and Cartesian proclamations is distinguished and the different perspectives are thematically woven together as a response to the sense of “crisis” in need of new discernment, rather than by new approaches in defining specific problems. The conclusions of postmodernism and deconstruction are not gratuitous nuggets containing certain solutions to be exchanged for edification of some spurious second enlightenment, but perhaps they are bridgeheads to different shores.

- The story of “dancing with uncertainty” starts with disentangling modern communication of sending “meaning” and receiving “clear” messages as impossible, towards postmodern communication where “communication is the message”. Consequently, counselling and theology are enlivened from ontology to praxis, not by the objective Word or an *a priori* method, theory or faith determination, but by the praxis of the Holy Spirit.
- Descartes’ legacy, determining life for more than three hundred years, is unraveled and thwarted:
 - The subject-object split in thinking and acting, supporting “representation” of objects by the subject, is debunked as false.
 - The transforming of “representation” into “presentation” as the heart of the modern problem, where knowledge is obtained “immediately” and not by way of mediation of language and numerous interpretations, and where God is known directly or “immediately” and not by way of *interpreted* revelation or human concepts, is rendered fictitious.
 - The determination of life in all its variety as mathematically, logically and formally certain, causing “facts” to be either true or false depending on the

“correct” methodology and theories as solutions, is exposed as conjured. Life, counselling and theology are always in a specific historical vista, cultural context and personal detailed milieu. The perspective determines the validity of the “fact”. If you live by “eternal truths” and predetermined certainty, there is no room for the work of the Holy Spirit.

- **A start is made to remove the modern Cartesian foundations of counselling and theologies towards postmodern approaches where we do not know what heals and what certain theology is. Every one can counsel through the Holy Spirit and there are as many theologies, as reactions on the revelations of God in Christ, as there are people. Theology and counselling are pre-theoretical and pre-cognitive as they do not proceed from a translucent self or a “neutral” language. We are not healed or saved through an objective certitude of believing dogmas or applying curing techniques, but by a living faith in Christ and an empowering praxis of the Holy Spirit enlivening us towards more humanness and humaneness.**
- **Our approach is pneumatological as we can never in any circumstance determine theology and counselling from outside the process of performing counselling and theologizing. That would follow the devious Cartesian subject-object split of determination of eternal objective truths and methods of curing from inside an isolated monad, the self. Postmodernism claims that we are always already immersed in the world and only when we assume not to be and step back, theorise, theologise and narrate narratives, devise counselling techniques, we actually determine final truths and facts. This is a total deception as we always approach theology and counselling, “objective reality” already with concepts, language assumptions, theories and values. Postmodernism claims that both realism, the conviction of a neutral independent world “out there”, as well as**

idealism (anti-realism), the conviction that certainty entails the mind in full self-consciousness, are false outgrowths of Cartesian representations of the subject-object split.

- The thesis culminates in the postmodern claim of the Holy Spirit overcoming the 2000 years old faith-knowledge dichotomy and dualism. The Holy Spirit does not assist in attaining “supernatural” healing in counselling or obtaining “eternal truth” clarity in theology, but in enhancing the humanness and humaneness of people in this world, eschewing another realm, the supernatural with dominant “theories”, “eternal truths” and final dogmas. Exuberance invading this life from the final victory of the Kingdom of God is effected by the Holy Spirit in all spheres of life, albeit tentatively and provisionally.

This study concludes by claiming that life is not theologically or psychologically certain, but joyous and beautiful, so that *we can always dance with uncertainty*.

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