HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies
ISSN: (Online) 2072-8050, (Print) 0259-9422

Healing the Cartesian wound: Towards a re-membering pedagogy in theological education in South Africa

Author:
Curtis R. Love[1]

Affiliation:
[1]Department of Philosophy, Practical and Systematic Theology, Faculty of Practical Theology, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

Corresponding author:
Curtis Love,
curtisluv@gmail.com

Dates:
Received: 09 May 2022
Accepted: 22 Aug. 2022
Published: 20 Dec. 2022

How to cite this article:
Love, C.R., 2022, 'Healing the Cartesian wound: Towards a re-membering pedagogy in theological education in South Africa', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 78(4), a7726. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i4.7726

Copyright:
© 2022. The Author. Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

Read online:
Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

A decolonial practice and understanding of education (whether theological or otherwise) requires engaging, subverting, deposing and reimagining a whole ecology of imaginaries, practices, structures, institutionalities, traditions, power asymmetries etc.: a task that is far beyond the capacities of any individual, community or even generation. Cognisant of this reality, the article foregrounds the question of pedagogy in theological education (but only as an integral part of the colonial/decolonial ecology of education) and argues that in so far as our pedagogies in theological education treat students primarily as 'thinking creatures', we are engaging in a dis-membering pedagogy that reproduces the coloniality of being. I identify a Cartesian anthropology ('ego cogito sum') – engendering a host of dualisms giving artificial supremacy to certain dimensions of reality over others – as a key animating source of dis-membering pedagogies. Drawing on the 'pedagogical excess' (i.e. underexplored pedagogical themes) in the theological anthropology of Simon Maimela in conversation with pedagogical visions that cohere and extend his anthropological commitments, I argue that a re-membering pedagogy is, at minimum: a pedagogy of performative action, embodiment and (community based) liminality. I argue throughout the article that in the work of re-sourcing our animating anthropologies and re-imagining our pedagogies, we are engaged in the healing work of re-membering that which coloniality has torn apart: theory and practice, mind and body, the individual and relationality, the student and the teacher, the theological school and society.

Contribution: This article outlines my attempts to theoretically and theologically ground (and extend) my espoused pedagogical commitments forged at the intersection of my community work and teaching as a theological educator in an undergraduate BTh programme. This article invites other theological educators to become conscious of the theological anthropology that their espoused pedagogical commitments assume and reflect on the pedagogical commitments that their theological anthropology entails, especially as it relates to the ongoing calls for the Africanisation/decolonisation of theological education in South Africa.

Keywords: pedagogy; coloniality of being; black; african; theological anthropology; theological education; colonialism; black theology; Simon Maimela.

Introduction

The viscerally descriptive image of dismemberment is used by Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2016:5) to name the history of the African continent since the arrival of Europeans. It is an image that evokes a sense of deep violence and wounding of African people (psychologically, socially, culturally, spiritually and physically), such that if it is going to be remedied, even partially, demands a profound act of *re-membering* (Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2016:5). In any discussion today on theological education (TE) in South Africa (SA), Africa or the Global South these dis-membering forces, which are constituted as *living history*, must be continuously taken into account.

This article will consider both dis-membering and re-membering technologies (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Ndlovu 2021:26) within TE in SA in the following way: I will briefly reflect on the existential circumstances from which this article arose before framing the calls for the Africanising/decolonising of TE in SA as calls for a *re-membering education*. I will use the generative notion of coloniality to delineate the connection between historical colonialism and the current world order – foregrounding the *coloniality of being* in my analysis. I will then argue that the *coloniality of being* is animated by a Cartesian anthropology (interpretation of human persons) that gives rise to particular pedagogies (constellations of learning and teaching practices) that continue to be

reproduced wherever students are primarily treated as 'thinking creatures'. I will argue that this Cartesian pedagogy has been harmful to black Africans[1] and indeed to all who have been marked by the 'colonial wound' (Mignolo 2009:8). I will then show how commitments in Simon Maimela's theological anthropology in conversation with some pedagogical visions that cohere with its commitments form part of the subversion of Cartesian anthropology in the ongoing struggle for a re-membering education in TE in SA.

When community work meets the academy

Existentially, this article arises from a desire to make my espoused pedagogy (that emerges from the intersection of my experience in community work and the teaching of undergraduate theology for the last 5 years) more self-consciously theological. Arising from 12 years of community work, I experienced a degree of 'culture shock' when teaching my first theology course in 2016 in an accredited undergraduate B.Th. programme. The nature of my appointment meant that I was required to teach across various parts of the theological encyclopaedia, which prompted questions and reflections on the kind of pedagogy that might speak to TE as a whole – rather than just discipline specific pedagogies. During the first semester of teaching (and in the years that followed) I became aware that my grassroots pedagogical commitments (in particular *learning as praxis*, *learning as community-building* and *learning as the embodied, co-creation of knowledge*) were not immediately helpful and at times even counterproductive, in what was expected from me as a lecturer (i.e. covering significant content, prescribed readings, individual assessments, classroom-based learning etc.). While intuitively I have sensed that the pedagogical commitments could make a contribution to the education that theological educators and churches believe they 'should' provide but often feel they are unable to do (Naidoo 2015:1–12), this article attempts to theologically and theoretically articulate these commitments in the context of the ongoing calls for the Africanising/decolonising of TE in SA.

Methodologically, this article seeks to ground and extend, both theologically and theoretically, my espoused pedagogical commitments forged at the intersection of my community work and teaching as a theological educator. Using the theological anthropology of Simon Maimela (for reasons I will outline here) and decolonial theory in conversation with the pedagogical visions of Reddie (2018), Headley (2018), Higgs (2015) and Mclaren (1987). I will argue that a re-membering pedagogy, arising from my own experiences, practices and observations within TE and as part of the ecology of a decolonial educational vision, is at minimum a *pedagogy of performative action/praxis*, *a pedagogy of embodiment and a pedagogy of (community based) liminality*.

Africanisation/decolonisation as re-membering theological education

Broadly speaking, I see the calls for the Africanisation/decolonisation of TE in SA, both in state universities (Balcomb 2015; Dames 2019; Duncan 2000; Higgs 2015; Kaunda 2015; Maluleke 1998; Naidoo 2016) and in denominational ministerial formation (Kritzinger 2010; Ntsimane 2010; Richardson & Leleki 2010) as calls for a re-membering TE (i.e. healing that which has been shattered by the colonial experience in new lived, liberating and life-affirming ways). Within 'formal' – and primarily ministerial – TE I would trace these calls for the Africanisation/decolonisation of TE in SA back to Ntwasa's *The Training of Black Ministers Today* (1972) first published in the *International Review of Missions* and then republished the following year in the watershed work, *Black Theology: The South African Voice* (ed. Moore 1973). Within 'English speaking' Africa, I would trace the calls back to Mbiti's parable of the 'pathetic priest' (1976), who upon return to Africa from Europe with a PhD in theology, is wholly unable to respond to the most basic of pastoral needs in his sending community. Interestingly, both Maluleke (1998) and Balcomb (2015) revisit Mbiti's 1976 parable and re-interpret it (affirming it's basic point) as part of their calls for the Africanising of TE in SA. In short, I am locating this reflection in a long tradition of calls for the practice and understanding of what I am calling a *re-membering* TE.

Colonialism, coloniality and the current world order

Decolonial theorists make an important distinction between *colonialism* and *coloniality*, which sets up many lines of argument and analysis that are useful in discerning continuity with historical colonialism and the current world order. Grosfoguel (2007) unpacked this distinction as 'the myth of the postcolonial world':

> One of the most powerful myths of the twentieth century was the notion that the elimination of colonial administrations amounted to the decolonization of the world. This led to the myth of a 'postcolonial' world. The heterogeneous and multiple global structures put in place over a period of 450 years did not evaporate with the juridical-political decolonization of the periphery over the past 50 years. We continue to live under the same 'colonial power matrix'. With juridical political decolonization we moved from a period of 'global colonialism' to the current period of 'global coloniality'. (p. 219)

1.I understand blackness and Africanness in two distinct modes: firstly in its dis-membering mode in which blackness and Africanness emerge 'within the history of racism, enslavement and colonisation as a badge of sub-humanity and inferiority' (2021:26); secondly, in its re-membering mode as a collection of 'discourses and initiatives of self-definition and self-reconstitution produced by people resisting and fighting racism, enslavement, colonialism and neo-colonialism' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Ndlovu 2021:26). These two modes of blackness and Africanness constantly need to be held in tension if they are to be meaningfully deployed and serve as a helpful heuristic in understanding '[…] [the] invention of "blackness" as a marker of sub-human, if not deficient, identity' (2021:26) and to 'appreciate the struggles for self-reconstitution and resistance to dehumanising Eurocentrism' (2021:26). Positioning oneself in these two modes, as I ongoingly attempt to do, opens up histories, symbols, stories, lived experiences, art and practices created by those bodies named (by white Europeans) as black Africans and those who have (and continue to) act in solidarity with these struggles. Along with these two modes, I am also following Vellem's use of black African, where black gestures to the historical trajectory of theologies of liberation and African to the historical trajectory of inculturation within African theological history (Vellem 2010:314). In my mind, seeing black and African as interpenetrating realities (i.e. black African) draws together important histories and practices of dis-membering/re-membering.

According to this understanding, while colonialism may have come to an end, its insidious and often invisibilised register – the 'colonial matrix of power' (CMP) – lives on in the form of *coloniality*. Coloniality is the force that continues to shape and sustain asymmetrical power relations between the Global North and the Global South (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2014:181) and is constituted by the interconnected and intertwined issues of *the coloniality of power*,[2] *the coloniality of knowledge*[3] and the *coloniality of being*.[4] These constitutive dimensions of the CMP can be thought of as 'units of analysis' that aid us in gaining a 'deeper understanding of the roots of African [and Global South's] predicaments and dilemmas, be they political, social, ideological, economic [theological] or epistemological' (parenthesis added Maldonado-Torres 2004:243).

Having established an understanding of coloniality, as distinct from colonialism, let us foreground *the coloniality of being* as one of the dis-membering forces at work in our world and in TE, especially as it manifests itself in a particular constellation of educational practices.

The *coloniality of being* as the pauperisation of African persons

The *coloniality of being* allows us to understand the 'impact of colonial technologies of subjectivation on the life, body, and mind of the colonised people' (Dastille & Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:99). In the context of Africa the *coloniality of being* seeks to name and ultimately dismantle, what black and African theologians jointly described, at the second general assembly of the ecumenical association of third world theologians (EATWOT) in 1986 (Joseph 2015), as 'the anthropological pauperization of the African person' (Martey 2009:38) or, more succinctly, as 'anthropological poverty'[5] (Mveng in Joseph 2015:198). This pauperisation is not simply an accident of history or a result of God's will, but rather an intentional process by which black Africans have been deprived of 'all that we have understood, all that we have acquired all that we are and all that we can do' (Martey 2009:38). A significant contribution of EATWOT's conceptualisation of Africa's predicament as anthropological poverty, is that it transcended the (sometimes) bitter binary that had developed between black theology of liberation in SA and African theologies of inculturation. This joint statement recognises that the pauperisation of African persons – or anthropological poverty – occurs at two levels (Martey 2009:38). Firstly, the socio-political and economic level, which is traditionally the *loci* of concern of black theologies, and secondly, the religio-cultural level, which is traditionally the *loci* of concern of African theologies of inculturation. In other words, this understanding of anthropological pauperisation resists reducing '[t]he coherence of Africa's historical realities [...] to a single dimension' (Martey 2009:37), whether religious, social, cultural, economic or political. This analysis is shared by decolonial theorists; Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) summarises:

> While analyses of the economic predicament of Africa are important, they focus on only one key trap that disabled the birth of a brave postcolonial African world after 1945 [...] [*T*]he global neo-colonial snares, otherwise known as colonial matrix of power were a complete package with social, economic, cultural, ideological, aesthetic and epistemological contours that combined to reduce, silence, dominate, oppress, exploit and overshadow the non-Western world. (p. 5)

The shared struggle between resisting the *coloniality of being* and what black and African EATWOT theologians called *the pauperisation of the African person* is an important point of connection and the basis of a mutually enriching dialogue between decolonial theorists and black African theologies. Towards this end, let us unpack the insights of a decolonial theorist who has made the most significant contribution to the synthesising, clarifying and 'thickening' of the notion of the *coloniality of being*: Nelson Maldonado-Torres, before considering this notion theologically and pedagogically.

The *coloniality of being* and Cartesian anthropology

According to Maldonado-Torres (2013), a key animating source of the *coloniality of being* is Descartes' philosophical anthropology. He argues that the Cartesian *ego cogito* [I think] should be located within the unacknowledged and presupposed *ego conquiro* [I conquer], which he explained as follows:

> The certainty of the self as a conqueror, of its tasks and missions, preceded Descartes's certainty about the self as a thinking substance (*res cogitans*) and provided a way to interpret it. I am suggesting that the practical conquering self and the theoretical thinking substance are parallel in terms of their certainty. The *ego conquiro* is not questioned, but rather provides the ground for the articulation of the *ego cogito*. (p. 99)

He (2013) goes on to say:

> The Cartesian idea about the division between *res cogitans* and *res extensa* (consciousness and matter) which translates itself into a divide between the mind and the body or between the human and nature is preceded and even, one has the temptation to say, to some extent built upon an *anthropological colonial difference* between the *ego conquistador* and the *ego conquistado*. (p. 99; [*author's added emphasis*])

While Descartes is conscious of his own methodological scepticism in his quest for certainty, Maldonado-Torres (2013:99) argues that a 'certain skepticism regarding the humanity of the enslaved and colonized sub-others stands [in] the background of the Cartesian certainties and his

2.The *coloniality of power* is a term coined by the Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano, which he defines as the '[…] racial social classification of the world population under Eurocentred world power' (in Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2014:71).

3.The *coloniality of knowledge* is variously described by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2014:198–199), as 'the epistemological colonisation of the mind and imagination'.

4.I will discuss the *coloniality of being* in further detail subsequently, but at this point it can be understood as 'to capture the hell that descended on the colonized lives and became naturalized and routinized as the African mode of being' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:133).

5.An important part of anthropological poverty that the joint statement failed to address (although I believe these blind spots can be 'taken up' within their basic articulation) was the gender and ecological dimensions of this poverty. For a gender critique of EATWOT and anthropological poverty, *which led to the formation of the Circle of Concerned Women Theologians*, see Oduyoye (1983) and for a magisterial exploration of the ecological dimensions of 'anthropological poverty', displacement of indigenous peoples from land-based, animal-related identities, see Jennings (2010).

methodic doubt'. In other words, Cartesian methodological skepticism must be understood to be preceded by a more fundamental skepticism that energises and sustains the *ego conquiro*; namely 'the imperial attitude'.

This analysis leads Maldonado-Torres (2013:99) to reformulate Descartes' *ego cogito sum* into a 'more philosophically and historically accurate' articulation, which reads as follows: '**I think** (others do not think, or do not think properly), **therefore I am** (others are not, lack being, should not exist or are dispensable)'.

Surmising Maldonado-Torres' (2013) analysis and reformulation to be correct, we can draw at least three inferences that will become important as we consider the relationship between theological anthropology and dis-membering/re-membering pedagogies in TE:

1. Whenever a Cartesian anthropology is operating, we can be confident that the *coloniality of being* and/or the pauperisation of African persons is operating.
2. Whenever we encounter a hierarchical division, which a Cartesian anthropology both assumes and engenders, between consciousness and matter, mind and body, theory, and practice, male and female, human and nature (and potentially many other kinds of hierarchical dualisms), we can deduce that the *coloniality of being and/or* the pauperisation of African persons is operating.
3. Whenever we encounter a pedagogy that thinks of the student as primarily a 'thinking creature', or where the Christian faith is conceived of as a set of 'ideas, principles, claims and propositions that are known and believed' (Smith 2009:44); where the goal of learning is 'correct thinking', 'sound doctrine', 'critical thinking' or any other equivalent euphemism or where the body is treated as a non-essential container for the mind (2009:44), then we can be confident that this pedagogy arises from a Cartesian anthropology.

In short, we can state that *wherever* a Cartesian anthropology and its consequent dualisms or a pedagogy that assumes students to primarily be 'thinking creatures' operates, then the coloniality *of being* and/or the pauperisation of the African persons is also operating.

The *coloniality of being* as a theological problem

Up until this point we have hinted at, but not yet addressed directly, why the *coloniality of being* is in fact a theological problem. While there are many ways in which we could parse this question, we shall use the work of Simon Maimela, a black theologian from SA (writing primarily in the 80s and 90s), on the heresy of apartheid and colonialism, which will then be transposed into an understanding of the *coloniality of being* as a theological problem. My first reason for selecting and foregrounding Maimela's work is because he can rightly be seen as the 'anthropologian' (Cortez 2010:8) of South African theology *par excellence* (Hopkins 1989:109, 197; Van Wyngaard 2017:2), which coheres with this article's focus on the connections between pedagogy and theological anthropology. My second reason for selecting and foregrounding Maimela is that I read a 'pedagogical excess' (i.e. his theological anthropology has interesting and germane pedagogical implications that seem under explored to me) in making my own learning and teaching practices more theological.

For Maimela, apartheid and colonialism are at the heart of an *anthropological problem* because they exclude black people from exercising their creative agency as creaturely persons made in the *imago Dei.* A key meaning of a humanity that is created *imago Dei* (among other things) is a humanity that co-creates the world and history with God (1994:17) *and* is relational and neighbour-oriented (1994:25). This means that for Maimela, apartheid and colonialism are heretical for two primary reasons: firstly, they 'monopolis[e] [...] the vocation of creative agency, excluding Black African people from God's task of having dominion over the earth and being agents of history' (Van Wyngaard 2017:4), and secondly, they deny the neighbour-oriented dimension of being created *imago Dei.* Maimela (1994) explained this denial as follows:

> The observation that to be human is to be neighbour-oriented, that we are created for fellowship with our fellows, is extremely important for us in South Africa. For it proclaims that our true humanity is not found in the glorification of isolationism of the sort that advocates of apartheid have been trying to promote over decades [...]. The upshot of this claim is that any human being who tries to avoid his or her ethnically or racially different neighbours can only become unhuman, because in isolation no one can ever become fully human, apart from one's fellows upon whom he [sic] depends. (p. 25)

Maimela's first critique of apartheid and colonialism transposes relatively easily into a theological critique of *the coloniality of being*, which can be formulated as follows: the *coloniality of being* is a theological problem because it continues to this day – through the CMP – to deny black Africans (and all those constrained by the colonial wound) in their vocation as divine representatives in creation, as co-creators of the world and agents of history. Maimela's second critique, that apartheid denies the neighbour-oriented dimension of the human vocation, doesn't transpose quite as easily because this critique is developed under juridical apartheid where racial classification and legal segregation were still in law. In other words, it was developed in a context where isolationism and the intentional constraining of black African agency, were legally (and violently) enforced by the state and woven into every dimension of social and public life. Thus, does his critique hold up once juridical–political apartheid has ended? Or does it – as Gabriel Molehe Setiloane (1980:49) writing in 1980 seems to think – collapse when 'the black vs. white scenario is over'. Here, in order to assess the relevance and usefulness of Maimela's project we must return to the key conceptual distinction that decolonial thinkers make between colonialism, which includes apartheid as a particular manifestation, and *coloniality*. In Pauline's terms

we might say that the law of colonialism is dead but its spirit persists; coloniality (in our argument as *the coloniality of being*) survives juridical colonialism. This kind of framing of our historical moment gives Maimela's project a relevance and potency far beyond what Setiolane foresaw (even with its limits, blind spots and historical contingencies, i.e. questions of gender and ecology). Using the notion of the *coloniality of being*, as the continued ontological degradation of black Africans beyond juridical–political colonialism we see that the neighbour-oriented dimension of the *imago Dei* continues to be denied.

Using Maimela's critique of colonialism and apartheid, viewed through the conceptual framework of coloniality/decoloniality, we have shown the *coloniality of being* to be a theological problem. Finally, let us now also consider the ways in which the *coloniality of being* is also a (dis-membering) pedagogical problem and consider how Maimela's anthropology, in dialogue with pedagogical visions that cohere, can re-source us on the journey towards a re-membering pedagogy.

The *coloniality of being* as a pedagogical problem

Smith offers an axiom that sets up an important connection that will help us understand the *coloniality of being* as a pedagogical problem. He claims that '[b]ehind every pedagogy is an anthropology' (2009:56) and continues, '[i]n more pedestrian terms, behind every constellation of educational practices is a *set of assumptions about the nature of human persons* – about the kinds of creatures we are' (emphasis added; 2009:56). The converse also holds true for Smith in the sense that every philosophical (or theological) anthropology also *entails* a pedagogy (2009:56).

In short, *all pedagogies are inscribed with an interpretation of human persons and all interpretations of human persons entail a pedagogy.* This bi-directional relationship between pedagogy and anthropology gives us some insight into how we might go about theologising a re-membering pedagogy:

1. *From pedagogy to anthropology*: The first direction in which we can theologise pedagogy is by drawing out the anthropology that lies behind a particular set of educational practices to analyse whether it coheres with a re-membering theological anthropology.
2. *From anthropology to pedagogy:* The second direction in which we can theologise pedagogy is by making the pedagogy within a re-membering theological anthropology explicit, thereby becoming conscious of the kind of pedagogy that coheres with this interpretation of human persons.

These two moves keep our pedagogies in the realm of theology (rather than simply outsourcing this difficult work to non-theological educational theorists) and allows for the possibility of an educator who is conscious of *the theological anthropology that is informing their pedagogy* and *the pedagogy that their theological anthropology entails*.

Using the given discussion as a heuristic for a decolonial analysis of TE we can say that in so far as a pedagogy assumes students to be primarily 'thinking creatures'; or that the body is treated as mostly incidental and relationality is marginalised or even ignored in the learning and teaching process, then this pedagogy is reproducing the *coloniality of being and/or pauperisation of African persons*. This kind of pedagogy, rooted in a Cartesian anthropology, reproduces hierarchical dualisms by ascribing supremacy to one dimension of reality over others. It is important for me to note that the given analysis is not to deny thinking as part of human experience (thereby setting up a new dualism!) but rather to dethrone it from its Cartesian supremacy and to locate it within an inter-related 'web' of embodied, historical, relational, situated (and many other potential) human contingencies.

Maimela's contribution to re-sourcing a re-membering pedagogy

Let us turn to three of the ways in which Maimela delineates his theological anthropology and consider some of its pedagogical implications (with a focus on subverting some of the dualisms a Cartesian anthropology sets up). I will do this in dialogue with Reddie's pedagogy of *performative action* (2018), Headley's *praxis-based approach* (2018), Higgs's *community-based pedagogy* (2015) and McLaren's understanding of the teacher as *liminal servant* (1987).

Human persons as co-creators with God: A pedagogy of *performative action*

The idea of human persons, as co-creators of the world and history (which we considered earlier in Maimela's critique of apartheid and colonialism) is woven throughout Maimela's anthropology. He (1994:17) understands the human vocation as one of being '[...] creatively related to the world and to our fellow human beings in and through whom our Creator is mediated to us'. It is a vision in which 'the Creator continues the divine creative work through the continuing activity of women and men to whom God has entrusted the task of giving the world order, structure and beauty' (1994:17). At this point we must note that Maimela's anthropology of co-creation with God must be read and interpreted through an African womanist lens if it is to be truly liberative today. Oduyoye (2007:68), as exemplar of this kind of womanist reading, constantly reminds the Church that women's dignity and faithfulness in expressing the *imago Dei* is not found in adherence to some predetermined gender role (i.e. reproduction, child-rearing, domestic life, etc.) but rather *all* genders are '[…] truly human to the extent that they approximate God's creativity, justice and compassion and exhibit holiness to which they are called by God'. Like all liberation theologies, Maimela and Oduyoye's anthropologies see *orthopraxy* as both the path and destination of theology and discipleship; meaning that their anthropologies entail a *praxis-oriented pedagogy*. By invoking praxis I am attempting to subvert the Cartesian theory/practice dualistic hierarchy in

favour of an understanding of the theory/practice relationship as one in which, 'theory flows from action and leads to further action' (McLaren 1987:83) in an enriching and energising mutuality.

I would like to consider a praxis-oriented pedagogy from two perspectives: firstly, from the perspective of classroom practices and secondly from the perspective of course design.

In the creative work of Reddie (2018:317), a black, practical theologian from the United Kingdom, we find a pedagogy that honours the praxis-oriented commitment of Maimela and Oduyoye (and indeed many other SA theologians), which he describes as a pedagogy of *performative action*. The distinctive strength of Reddie's work, in my view, is that he has developed and described in theoretically rich ways exercises, games and dramas (2014, 2018, 2020) that foreground questions of race, class and gender that can be worked with in classroom contexts (or at least as a stimulus for educators to think of possibilities in their own teaching work). Reddie's (2009) approach invites participants to:

> [*U*]se their imaginations and then playfully express new thoughts and construct different ways of acting in light of the Christian faith as a means of being 'changed agents' for justice, peace and equity for all peoples. (p. XIV)

It is a pedagogy that involves (2018):

> [...] [C]reatively engag[*ing*] with the 'other' in a socio-constructed space […] in which all participants promise to engage […] in a fashion that affirms mutuality, cooperation and a shared commitment to the production of new knowledge. (p. 317)

The nature of the knowledge, co-produced through *performative action* is for the 'express purpose of changing behaviour and developing better praxis in terms of Christian discipleship' (2018:317). This kind of (classroom based) praxis-oriented pedagogy acts as a remedy to divorcing TE from discipleship and spirituality.

Headley describes a praxis-based approach to TE course design that emerged from her experience of participating with a group of faith-based practitioners in Cape Town. She describes her experience as part of a 2016 cohort in the *Leadership in Urban Transformation* [LUT] course, facilitated by Urban theologian Stephen De Beer[6] (Headley 2018). Hedley gives a rich and multilayered account of her 10 month experience with LUT but I will just highlight two dimension of her reflections on a praxis-based approach to course design that are germane to our discussion: (1) a praxis-based approach to course design '[...] create[s] space for theological inquiry in tension with self-reflection, social analysis, spiritual formation and theological reflection, leading to new actions' and (2) it encourages a transdisciplinary understanding of the (in this case, urban) context through exposure to 'academics, community members, urban geographers, sociologists, systematic theologians, city planners and community activists'. De Beer, who designed and facilitated the course, provides its theological, theoretical and pedagogical underpinnings in his body of work (see esp. 2012, 2014, 2017; De Beer & Van Niekerk 2017).

Reddie and Headley describe praxis-oriented pedagogies in both classroom and course design contexts in which renewed practice and the development of theory are ongoing, emergent and mutually enriching dynamics in the learning and teaching process.

Human persons as historical, located beings: A pedagogy of embodiment

Maimela's understanding of humans as co-creators with God does not seek to describe some generic, ahistorical human 'essence' but rather, embodied beings that 'exist concretely in particular communities, societies and nations in which they hold certain positions and in which they are accorded certain rights and are burdened by certain duties and obligations' (1997:5). Human persons, in Maimela's anthropology, are embodied, historical and located beings who most fully enact their vocation when they, individually and collectively, organise their bodies in ways that are creative, life-giving and just. The question of embodiment is, again, one that many African Womanist scholars have taken up in their work (Oduyoye 2007:69), both critiquing dualist hierarchies and arguing for embodiment as a valid starting point for theology. Grillo, in the context of African indigenous religious studies, identifies *bodily kinaesthetic intelligence* (McLaren 1987:87) as 'ritual action'. Challenging the notions that ritual is not an unthinking, repetitive bodily act (which early Protestant religious studies scholars sometimes caricatured it to be) but rather as the transmission of '[…] sophisticated ideas with considerable power, *even without the embellishment of accompanying story or explication*' (emphasis added; 2012:112). In others words bodily ritual action *is discourse in and of itself*, even without additional reflection and, *contra* a Cartesian anthropology, does not see that body as incidental to our 'thinking self'. Rather the 'spectacular, performative and participatory nature of ritual creates experiences that instil [critical ideas] through bodily ways of knowing' (parenthesis added 2012:112).

Again, a pedagogy of embodiment does not simply invert the Cartesian hierarchy giving supremacy to the body over the mind but rather, it seeks to begin '[…] healing the cruel rupture that patriarchal (i.e. Cartesian) thinking has introduced into theology; it attempts to put the *body, mind and emotions back together'* (parenthesis and emphasis added; Isherwood & Stuart 1998:33).

Human persons as relational and neighbour-oriented: A pedagogy of (community-based) liminality

Higgs, a South African philosopher reflecting on the resources of African philosophy for the decolonisation of higher education, shares Maimela's commitment to a relational and

6.This course is housed in the *Centre for Faith and Community* (formerly the Centre for Contextual Ministry), at the University of Pretoria.

neighbour-oriented anthropology. He argues that this anthropology demands a *community-based approach* (2015:51) to TE. He sees this as an approach to education as one of participatory involvement in which TE is carried out 'by, with and for the community' (2015:51). It is an approach to TE that seeks integration between the academy and the local community because it 'forces the inclusion of grassroots perspectives on theological education' (2015:52). The implications of Higgs's claims are radical because they call for a foundational reimagining of the context, purpose and pedagogy of TE. The strength of Higgs's proposal, like the LUT programme, is that it is not captive to thinking about TE within the limits of the (physical or virtual) classroom.

For those of us who primarily carry out our teaching in formal educational institutions, I would also like to consider McLaren's proposal for reimagining the teacher's role, in a relational and neighbour-oriented way, *within* the context of the classroom. While McLaren (1987:82), a close ally and disciple of Freire, recognises the classroom as a potential site of the reproduction of oppressions he also believes that all classrooms 'can exhibit some emancipatory [...] activity' and so he is not willing to completely abandon the emancipatory possibility of the classroom. McLaren (1987:76), drawing on Christian eucharistic practice, symbols and imagery invites us to reimagine the role of the teacher as a *liminal servant,* which he contrasts with the *teacher as entertainer* and the *teacher as hegemonic overlord*. He (1987:76) argues that the teacher acts in service of *liminality* when the classroom is transformed into a space where 'participants are removed temporarily from a social structure maintained and sanctioned by power and force' and the students become 'co-celebrants of knowledge with the teacher and the class [is] transformed into a congregation'. Theologically, we can think of liminality as the eschatological inbreaking of God's gracious economy (Reddie 2018:402) where neighbour-oriented relationality is experienced and affirmed. Liminality in the classroom can be thought of as 'liberated zone' in which *coloniality* is named, wrestled with and potentially exorcised even if only for a moment and boundaries between students and the teacher dissolve as all are drawn into a larger whole. McLaren's image offers a guiding metaphor, rooted in Christian eucharistic practice, for how the classroom with the teacher as liminal servant can subvert the supremacy of the Cartesian autonomous individual in favour of a relational, neighbour-oriented space.

While I have attempted to reflect on a discerned pedagogical excess in Maimela's anthropology in relation to pedagogical practices in the classroom and course design, deepening a decolonial pedagogy will also require us to engage in small scale, marginal experiments beyond the policing and control of formal institutions - what De Sousa Santos calls *'prefigurative instutionalities and pedagogies'* (2018:1). He describes it as 'ways of organizing collective conviviality and promoting liberating learning processes capable of credibly accomplishing, here and now and on a small scale, another possible future world' (2018:1).

Conclusion

In this article I have sought to both ground and extend my espoused pedagogy that emerges at the intersection of my background in community work and my experience of teaching in an undergraduate theology programme. I have named *the coloniality of being* as a significant contributing source to a dis-membering TE in SA, Africa and the Global South. I have argued that the *coloniality of being*, as a constituent dimension of coloniality, is animated by a Cartesian anthropology that gives rise to a particular constellation of educational practices that reproduces the pauperisation of black African persons and all those marked by the colonial wound. This pedagogy has a dis-membering force to it, which is express through its production of hierarchical dualisms, giving supremacy to (among other things) theory over practice, the mind over the body and the autonomous individual over relationality. All these dualisms emerge from a more fundamental *anthropological colonial difference,* which infuses them with their violence and raises the stakes in our ability to address them. As a riposte to this dis-membering Cartesian pedagogy, Maimela's *co-creational*, *embodied* and r*elational* anthropology was explored as a way of re-sourcing pedagogy in TE in SA. Maimela's anthropology in dialogue with Reddie's pedagogy of *performative action,* Headley's *praxis-based approach,* Higgs's *community-based* pedagogy and McLaren's vision of the teacher as *liminal servant* were used to subvert a Cartesian anthropology and pedagogy. Rather than the supremacy of theory over practice, I have argued for a *praxis-oriented pedagogy* that sees practice and theory as mutually energising realities; rather than the supremacy of the mind over the body, I argue for a *pedagogy of embodiment* that takes seriously ritual action as a way of reintegrating body, mind and feeling; and finally, rather than the supremacy of the autonomous individual over relationality I have argued for *a (community-based) pedagogy of liminality* in which individual learning gets its meaning by, with and for the community and the classroom becomes a potential space of concelebration and liminality between students and the teacher and the theological school and the wider community.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

Author's contribution

C.L. is the sole author of this article.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

The article was made possible (in part) by the Lorenz Family Foundation (LFF). The views of the article are the author's own and does not necessarily reflect the views of the LFF.

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author.

References

Balcomb, A., 2015, 'Theological education in South Africa and the epistemological divide: In search of the African Habitus', *Scriptura* 114, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.7833/114-0-1039

Cortez, M., 2010, *Theological anthropology: A guide for the perplexed*, Bloomsbury Publishing, New York, NY.

Dames, G.E., 2019, 'A dangerous pedagogy of discomfort: Redressing racism in theology education', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 75(4), a5060. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i4.5060

Dastille, N.P. & Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J., 2013, 'Power, knowledge and being: Decolonial combative discourse as a survival kit for pan-Africanists in the 21st century', *Alternation* 20(1), 105–134.

De Beer, S., 2012, 'Urban South Africa: An opportunity for liberating theological education', *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Missiology* 40(3), 251–277. https://doi.org/10.7832/40-3-32

De Beer, S., 2014, 'Whose knowledges shape our city? Advancing a community-based urban praxis', *De Jure* 47(2), 218–230. https://doi.org/10.10520/EJC166193

De Beer, S., 2017, 'Urban social movements in South Africa today: Its meaning for theological education and the church', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 73(3), a4770. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i3.a4770

De Beer, S. & Van Niekerk, A., 2017, 'Transforming curricula into the next century: Doing theology collaboratively with local communities', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 38(4), 213–242. https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v38i4.1683

De Sousa Santos, B., 2018, *The end of the cognitive empire: The coming of age of epistemologies of the South*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC.

Duncan, G.A., 2000, 'Theological education: Mission birth – African renaissance', *Missionalia* 28(1), 23–40.

Grillo, L.S., 2012, 'African rituals', in E.K. Bongmba (ed.), *Wiley and Blackwell companion to African religion*, pp. 112–126, Chichester.

Grosfoguel, R., 2007, 'The epistemic decolonial turn: Beyond political-economy paradigms', *Cultural Studies* 21(2–3), 211–223. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162514

Headley, S.D., 2018, 'Erratum: A praxis-based approach to theological training in Cape Town', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74(1), a5340. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i1.5340

Higgs, P., 2015, 'The African renaissance and the decolonisation of theological education', in M. Naidoo (ed.), *Contested issues in training ministers in South Africa*, pp. 43–56, African Sun Media, Stellenbosch.

Hopkins, D.N., 1989, *Black theology USA and South Africa: Political and cultural Liberation*, Orbis, Maryknoll, NY.

Isherwood, L. & Stuart, E., 1998, *Introducing body theology*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield.

Jennings, W.J., 2010, *The Christian imagination: Theology and the origins of race*, Yale University Press, New Haven.

Joseph, M.P., 2015, *Theologies of the non-person: The formative years of EATWOT*, Springer, New York, NY.

Kaunda, C.J., 2015, 'The denial of African agency: A decolonial theological turn', *Black Theology* 13(1), 73–92. https://doi.org/10.1179/1476994815z.00000000048

Kritzinger, J.N., 2010, 'Ministerial formation praxis in the uniting reformed church in Southern Africa: In search of inclusion and authenticity', *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 38(2), 211–234.

Maimela, S.S., 1994, *What is the human being?,* Public Relations, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.

Maimela, S.S., 1997, 'What is the human being from biblical perspective?', *BOLESWA, Occasional Papers in Theology and Religion* 6(1), 5–12.

Maldonado-Torres, N., 2004, 'The topology of being and the geopolitics of knowledge: Modernity, empire, coloniality', *City* 8(1), 29–56. https://doi.org/10.1080/1360481042000199787

Maldonado-Torres, N., 2013, 'On the coloniality of being: Contributions to the development of a concept', in W.D. Mignolo & A. Escobar (eds.), *Globalization and the decolonial option*, pp. 94–124, Routledge, New York, NY.

Maluleke, T.S., 1998, 'The Africanization of theological education: Does theological education equip you to help your sister?', *Journal of Constructive Theology* 4(2), 3–20.

Martey, E., 2009, *African theology: Inculturation and liberation*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR.

Mbiti, J., 1976, 'Theological impotence and the universality of the church', in G. Anderson & S. Thomas (eds.), *Mission trends*, vol. 3, pp. 6–18, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.

McLaren, P.L., 1987, 'The anthropological roots of pedagogy: The teacher as liminal servant', *Anthropology Humanism Quarterly* 12(3–4), 75–85. https://doi.org/10.1525/ahu.1987.12.3-4.75

Mignolo, W.D., 2009, *The idea of Latin America*, John Wiley & Sons, NJ, Hoboken.

Moore, B., 1973, *Black theology: The South African voice*, Hurst, London.

Naidoo, M., 2015, *Contested issues in training ministers in South Africa*, African Sun Media, Stellenbosch.

Naidoo, M., 2016, 'Overcoming alienation in Africanising theological education', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72(1), a3062. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i1.3062

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J., 2013, *Coloniality of power in postcolonial Africa*, African Books Collective. Oxford.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J., 2014, 'Global coloniality and the challenges of creating African futures', *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 36(2), 181–202. https://doi.org/10.35293/srsa.v36i2.189

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J. & Zondi, S., 2016, *Decolonizing the university, knowledge systems and disciplines in Africa*, Carolina Academic Press, Durham, NC.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S.J. & Ndlovu, P., 2021, 'The invention of blackness on a world scale', in M. Steyn & W. Mpofu (eds.), *Decolonising the human: Reflections from Africa on difference and oppression*, Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 25–45. https://doi.org/10.18772/22021036512

Ntsimane, R., 2010, 'The fragile identity of being Lutheran and African: The vulnerability of confessional Lutheran seminaries in Africa today', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* XXXVI(2), 219–235.

Ntwasa, S., 1972, 'Training of black ministers today', *International Review of Mission* 61(242), 177–182. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6631.1972.tb01025.x

Oduyoye, M.A., 1994, *'Reflections from a third world woman's perspective: Women's experience and liberation theologies'*, U. king (ed.), *Feminist theology from the third world: A reader*, Orbis, Maryknoll, NY.

Oduyoye, M., 2007, *Introducing African women's theology*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield.

Reddie, A., 2014, *Dramatizing theologies: A participative approach to Black God-talk*, Routledge, London.

Reddie, A., 2018, 'Transformative pedagogy, Black theology and participative forms of praxis', *Religions* 9(10), 317. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9100317

Reddie, AG. 2020. *Is God Colour-Blind? : Insights from Black Theology for Christian Faith and Ministry*. London: SPCK Publishing.

Richardson, N. & Leleki, S., 2010, 'From ecumenical experiment, to denominational necessity, to holistic vision: The Methodist journey in ministerial training', *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 38(2), 235–247.

Setiloane, G.M., 1980, 'Theological trends in Africa', *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 8(2), 47–53.

Smith, J.K., 2009, *Desiring the kingdom: Worship, worldview, and cultural formation*, Baker Academic, MI, Grand Rapids.

Van Wyngaard, G.J., 2017, 'The theological anthropology of Simon Maimela: Democratisation of power and being human in relationship', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 38(1), a1682. https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v38i1.1682

Vellem, V., 2010, '*Serithi/isidima*: Reflections on human dignity in South Africa from a black African perspective', *Scriptura: International Journal of Bible, Religion and Theology in Southern Africa* 104(1), 314–321.