Stellenbosch Theological Journal 2019, Vol 5, No 3, 145–164
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.17570/stj.2019.v5n3.a07
Online ISSN 2413-9467 | Print ISSN 2413-9459

In search of the grain: Israel, the Palestinians, South Africa and Germany

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Abstract

In this article I investigate the scientific grounds for reflecting on Palestine-Israel in light of other struggles, particularly those against Nazism and South African apartheid. Keeping in mind the distinction between simplistic comparisons and the use of analogies when events are not exact replications of one another, I evaluate John de Gruchy's intersectional approach to Israel and the Palestinians. Likewise, I reflect on the cross-contextual reasons for Jewish Israeli and South African activists' impression of the Palestinian struggle being part of a broad moral struggle against othering that transcends the boundaries of the geo-political context. The article concludes that critical scientific discussions and responsible moral discernment on Israel's relation with the Palestinians cannot ignore the meta-narratives of systemic injustices such as state-sanctioned violence, apartheid, colonialism or ethnic cleansing that gave rise to resistance movements and prophetic theology in the contexts of Nazism and South African apartheid.

Key words

Palestinian struggle; Israel; South Africa; Bonhoeffer; intersectionality

1. Introduction

The idea of referencing other contexts of gross human rights violations in relation to the practices and policies of Zionist Israel is often viewed as deeply problematic by many. Well-meaning Christians who may be horrified by systemic discrimination, violence and oppression elsewhere in the world endure the perpetual killing, maiming, dispossessing and uprooting of Muslim, Christian and other Palestinians as a necessary cost for the safety of Israel. Research amongst mainline Protestants in the United

States of America, for example, indicate that Christians who value scientific verification and who find fundamentalist and literal interpretations of the Bible problematic do not associate with the Palestinians' experience of pain and their quest for self-determination and freedom. These Christians are generally progressive on human rights for especially the historically oppressed and women, and yet they tend to be sceptic about the validity of the Palestinian struggle (Raheb 2014:25–26).

In this essay I probe into the scientific merits of raising Israel's relation with the Palestinians in the contexts of other human rights struggles such as colonialism, apartheid and ethnic cleansing. More specifically, I reflect on whether it is scientific or not to reference the contexts of Nazism and South African apartheid in critical discussions on the nature of the Palestinian struggle. In order to propose a scientific baseline for evaluating the scientific integrity of any arguments that support crosslines between the three contexts I first distinguish between simplistic parallelism and other options when events are not exact replications of one another. Next, I consider the merits of using an intersectional approach to reflect on Palestine-Israel in the work of John De Gruchy. This is followed by a review of arguments proposed by Jewish Israeli and South African activists who link the nature of the Palestinian struggle to the dynamics of other crimes against humanity before a conclusion is reached.

2. False parallelism or scientific connections?

The dilemma of ascertaining the scientific merits of using one context in reference to another with the aim to highlight similarities raises the matter of representativeness. Whether or not one situation can be considered to enlighten the understanding of another is linked to the tension between the actual details of the respective contexts and their meta-narratives.

When the aim is to scrutinize the details of different contexts one can weigh up similarities and differences in, for example, the duration, the depth and the scale of the violations, the geo-politics and the parties involved. In the case of Nazism, a staggering eleven million people, six million of them Jews, died during a regime of National Socialism and a Zeitgeist of Social Darwinism. Pledging to protect all people's human rights within the framework of international law, the United Nations came

into operation on 24 October 1945. However, a mere three years later more than 80 percent of the then Palestinian population became refugees in 1948. The locals lost most of their land to the new Zionist Israeli state.[1] That same year South African practices of racial segregation became enshrined in law and the apartheid regime reigned for almost fifty years. For the Palestinians things worsened. More than seven decades later the refugees are still not allowed to return to their homes and properties, as allowed for in UN Resolution 194. The United Nations Assembly's approximately 200 resolutions on Israel and the Palestinians fail to end or even halt Israel's ongoing violations of multiple international laws. This simplistic analysis shows different locations (Europe, the Middle East, South Africa), different peoples (Jews, Arabs, South Africans), different eras (pre- and post-World War II, the 21st century) and different state policies (National Socialism, Zionism, apartheid). From this angle of incidence, it is clear that the three struggles are neither exact replications of one another nor yield detailed, quantitatively accurate similarities.

In another kind of comparative analysis situations can be evaluated in a hierarchical way whereby one catastrophe is used as a benchmark for another. According to the Jewish authors Grunebaum-Ralph and Stier (1999:142) the Shoah is often seen as a "new instrument of measurement against which all other cases of atrocity are compared". But such view is in a certain sense a mistake they argue, since human suffering does not allow for "an arithmetic of atrocity" and the assumption that the Holocaust is the worst of all human tragedies "takes away the specificity of one case by comparing it in this way to another". At the same time, they regard a process of comparison "in favour of a 'forgetful' line" (Grunebaum-Ralph & Stier, 1999:143) as a means to minimise gross human rights abuses in other contexts such as under South African apartheid, as also untenable

In contrast to simplistic comparisons that strives for parallelism an interpretive, qualitative paradigm invites different ways of evaluating

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1 Most European Jews who settled in Historical Palestine at the dawn of the twentieth century had little desire to change Historical Palestine's political, economic and social structures. During the first decades of the twentieth century, this idea of a secure identity and place for Jews in a shared land (Homeland Zionism) opposed the idea of a Jewish state on Palestinian land (State Zionism) that values Jewish exceptionalism (Ellis 2014:28–30, 35–40). However, Homeland Zionism gave way to State Zionism.

validity and reliability between situations. When similarities between contexts are not statistically or historically representative, conclusive or replicable the scientific analysis has to involve in-depth, nuanced, non-hierarchical reflections. In such evaluations the investigative process, the data and the interpretation thereof must have integrity. As Babbie and Mouton (2001:122) point out, the reliability and validity of arguments are increased when there are variation and richness in the concepts under discussion. But such varied meanings also enlarge the chances for disagreement in how the concepts apply to the contexts under consideration. The variation lies in the supporting arguments and the validity of arguments has to do with both internal and external points of reference.

Validity, or "the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration" (Babbie & Mouton 2001:122–123) can be indicated by congruency between the various sources of data. If there is congruency between, for example, the lived circumstances, experiences and opinions of people and the findings of reputable scholarly and professional sources the nuances and differences in commonalities add depth and texture. The congruency also points to consistency, authenticity and therefore to the credibility and dependability of the findings. Following this line of thought Remenyi (2012:21) thus argues that in some instances it may be more appropriate "to refer to the issues of credibility, transferability, dependability and usability than to validity, reliability and generalisability". With these guidelines in mind I shall reflect briefly on examples of inter-contextual analyses that aim to highlight the dangers of Zionism.

3. John de Gruchy's intersectional approach to Israel and the Palestinians

As a skilled woodworker, John de Gruchy knows that to shape a chunk of wood into a piece of beauty, his craftmanship must respect the texture of wood and its grain. Whether at his workbench, his desk, behind the pulpit or in the public arena, the point for John is to engage with the tangible reality of this world with all its flaws in his quest for human dignity. His personal, public, spiritual and scholarly responses are contextualised and

consistently guided by the grain, or the inner core, of what it means to be human and a Christian – especially in trying circumstances.

Socio-political and church struggles, global citizenship, the South African, German and Israel-Palestinian contexts and the connections between struggles in different contexts are recurrent themes in De Gruchy's work, often punctuated by references to Kairos theology and Bonhoeffer. When as a young scholar in the United States De Gruchy started to focus on Bonhoeffer, the post-World War II climate of the sixties was characterised by renewed Jewish-Christian relations and enthusiastic support for the newly declared state of Israel. In addition to this climate De Gruchy's theology was shaped also by events in his home country, South Africa. A major ecumenical statement, *The Message to the people of South Africa* rejected apartheid as "a false gospel" in 1968 and it marked the start of South Africa's church struggle against apartheid. During the next two decades, both the oppression of Black South Africans and the resistance to apartheid intensified. In 1985 the Lusaka conference between the World Council of Churches and South African churches declared that violence under certain circumstances are justified. Short on the heels of the Lusaka statement and in that same year followed the South African Kairos document (SAKD) in which a group of mainly Black theologians challenged their own and other churches' inadequate responses to the apartheid regime's measures to suppress the resistance movement. The SAKD stated that the Bible does not demand obedience or loyalty to oppressive rulers and regimes, referencing also Bonhoeffer's notions of cheap and costly reconciliation in the face of resistance against tyranny. For the first time in South Africa's church struggle, the notion of restoration of justice *followed by* reconciliation was expressed. John de Gruchy became one the first people to sign this document. The only South African church to endorse the SAKD at the time was The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa of which De Gruchy is a member.

De Gruchy first visited Israel and occupied Palestine in 1970. A second visit followed in 1990. On both occasions he was struck by the harsh reality reminiscent of South African apartheid and the disconcerting closeness between the South African and Israeli governments. During the seventies and eighties his sensitivity to the complicity of Christians in Jewish suffering made him hesitant to criticize Israel. Yet over the years his involvement in

the South African church struggle against apartheid, his witness of Israeli apartheid, his studies of Bonhoeffer and the voices of especially Christian Palestinians and Jews who advocate for a just peace helped De Gruchy to realise the asymmetric nature of the conflict and that in relation to Israel the Palestinians are the primary victims. After his second visit, De Gruchy's reflections on the SAKD and Bonhoeffer's doctrine of costly solidarity included references also to the Palestine-Israel matter. Bonhoeffer's distinctions between a true and a false church reminded De Gruchy (1997) of the SAKD's distinction between a church that sides with state violence ("state theology"), a church that rejects apartheid in principle but takes no action ("church theology"), and a church that sides unequivocally with the oppressed in a struggle for justice ("prophetic theology").

In 2009 the Palestinians' Kairos document, itself inspired by the theology tabled in the 1985 SAKD, saw the light. Two years later the Church Parliament (Kirchenkonferenz) of the Evangelical Church in Germany unanimously questioned the analogy between the SAKD and Kairos Palestine. They advised "against describing the situation in a way which can be seen as ideologizing" (Nieper 2012). De Gruchy (2012:77), in turn, regarded the Kairos Palestine document as "a theological confession of faith that engages reality, and calls for resistance in the struggle for justice and peace in a way that resonates with Bonhoeffer's legacy." As such he argued that a responsible Christian response entails "non-violent resistance to oppression, the way of loving rather than hating enemies" combined with costly solidarity that steers clear of "cheap reconciliation" (De Gruchy 2012:80), or a compromised atonement without restorative justice that remain loyal to a church theology that denotes Christians' ambiguous critique of the state in subtle, cautious, limited ways while they ask for action and support so-called reforms.

Church theology is in general characterised by a language of "balance and fairness to both sides", "reconciliation, peace and non-violence at all costs" without taking any structural violence, state-sanctioned or systemic injustice and unequal socio-political realities into account. Hence the implementation of international human rights laws to end any injustice as a first step is not encouraged. Instead, church theology promotes interfaith and other dialogue groups that perpetuate notions of binary relations at the cost of the marginalised. Thus, the structure and contents of such

discussion forums do not reflect any power asymmetry honestly but serve as instruments to falsely normalise the oppressor and the oppressed as peers. In the context of Israel and the Palestinians, this approach often denies or minimises the catastrophic events of 1948 when more than eighty percent of Palestinians became refugees, many others were killed, and Zionists declared huge parts of Historical Palestine as a Jewish-only state called Israel. Christians who support such church theology focus only on the wrongs of the occupation after the 1967 war. They tend to regard the misdeeds against Palestinians as unfortunate, however Jewish victimhood and homelessness are deemed worse than the plight of the Palestinians. This exceptionalism or double standards whereby the plight of Jews is deemed worthier than that of the Palestinians reflects a hierarchical comparison which is scientifically unacceptable. It defies also the inclusive compassion of the Gospel. Such approach is not credible and usable and therefore neither scientific nor morally acceptable.

In contrast to an approach based on church theology, the 2015 Dangerous Memories international conference in Johannesburg commemorated the relevance of the SAKD for the present reality with a clear reference to Israel and the Palestinians. The delegates who included John de Gruchy stated that they could not remember the 1985 South African Kairos appeal for solidarity against apartheid without a critical reflection on what informs the Palestinians' reality. The 2015 conference statement draws attention to the unacceptable complicity of Christian Zionism as a form of "state theology" that supports "state terror" against the Palestinians and to corresponding imperial dynamics during South African apartheid. In the same manner than under South African apartheid it states, a racist ideology and in this case Zionism, "has been used to justify the dispossession, transfer, massacring, ghettoization and exploitation of the Palestinian people. Zionism has become an element within the dominant structures of empire … Palestine is the space where our sacred texts are contested" (Kairos 2015:n.p.). Indeed, theology becomes a site of struggle when people's moral codes differ to the extent that some are more loyal to oppressive powers and ideologies than to the fullness of life for all.

In a subsequent essay De Gruchy (2016:1) linked the SAKD, the Kairos Palestine document and the theology of Bonhoeffer to advocate for "an ecumenical prophetic ecclesiology that foregrounds the responsibility of

the church to discern and understand those God-given *kairos* moments in history that demand a prophetic response". He has in mind not mere scholarly theological reflection, but active resistance to state and church policies that maintain agendas of power and privilege at the cost of justice and human dignity. No matter how challenging or how close to home the situation may be the question, "Who is the victim?" consistently serves as his moral compass: "Bonhoeffer's solidarity with the victims of injustice, whoever they might be, and his preparedness to speak out and act where possible on their behalf, is unequivocal", he stated earlier (De Gruchy 2011:125). As put by Le Bruyns (2015:469), De Gruchy's response calls forth the integrated dimensions of a *kairos* consciousness such as a "vision of change", "a virtue of criticality" and a "practice of contextuality" that portrays a lived theology. To this I would like to add that the consistency in De Gruchy's ethics, no matter how challenging the context, portrays integrity. He was one of a few white theologians in South Africa to openly challenge apartheid and he is now one of a minority of Christians who openly challenges Zionism.

Thus, De Gruchy's cross-contextual analysis is not based on statistical or content validity that aim to generalise. His analysis resembles a qualitative process of ongoing and in-depth discernment with close attention to the reality, the ethics and the dynamics at play. Since he has acknowledged the asymmetric relations between Israel and the Palestinians, he was able to apply justice and compassion for the marginalised under all circumstances. The implications of this position is that he does not side with a nation or a state, but chooses for inclusive human dignity. Such an inter-contextual approach is credible, useful as well as morally and scientifically responsible.

4. Intersectionality in the views of Jewish Israeli and South African activists

Grunebaum-Ralph and Stier (1999:142) noted that different contexts can be understood in relation to one another, because "together they tell us more than we knew about the single case in isolation". Following a similar line of thought, a Jewish South African who campaigns for Palestinian rights remarked that places such as Germany, Palestine, Israel and South Africa make visible "under a microscope what so many places in the world

experienced which is discrimination, segregation, living as refugees, living precarious lives, being hounded out at any moment, or the threat of that". In her view these countries bring home intensely "aspects of those experiences that tell us more about what it means to be a human being, or what it can mean, how difficult it is to be a *Mensch*. Why it's easier to swim with the stream, why it's easier to not step out and liberate ourselves." (R6 2015:82–83)[2]

She was one of 21 anonymous South African and Jewish Israeli respondents in a case study that explored citizens' self-perceived motivations for campaigning for Palestinian rights.[3] This woman's family was persecuted in Germany under the Nazi regime. The effect of this suffering is still part of their reality. Her personal process of connecting the dots between different struggles occurred over years and her exposure to the effect of South African apartheid played a significant role in her current inter-contextual understanding. It is a process that required her to be brutally honest with herself. Working as a young adult at an ex-liberation combatants' organisation committed to South Africa's post-apartheid social reconstruction and decolonisation, she listened for hours to veterans of the armed struggle. The issue of the Palestinian struggle often came up. Each and every time she wanted to respond with saying "but" in the sense of "but you don't understand what we as Jews have been through. A Jewish homeland is necessary for Jews to be safe in the world". However, she found that she could not articulate this sense like this after what she heard from these men and about what they had gone through. Being bound to listen, it dawned on her that the Palestinians were asking for similar things. The

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2 Numbers were allocated to each of the anonymous respondents (R1, R2, and so forth). R1 to R10 are South African, R11 toR20 are Jewish Israelis and R21 has citizenship of both countries. The interviews are available in the research project's hermeneutic unit and the bibliographical details indicate the numbering of paragraphs in ATLAS.ti. The software offers a systematic, traceable process which allows others to evaluate the researcher's data handling decisions.

3 The study was exploratory and therefore informed by the research question, rather than by pre-existing or pre-determined theories or hypotheses. The research results were presented in the form of grounded statements. The responding activists neither belonged to any pre-selected organisations, nor were they recruited through a defined number of pre-selected organisations. They were a mix of personal contacts, people who were introduced through mutual contacts and people to whom I wrote without any prior introduction. The respondents came from different countries, religious orientations, generations and genders.

respondent's insights and the logic of De Gruchy support the idea that it is not about proving or disproving parallel experiences, but that one can learn from the underlying dynamics, the consciousness, the world views, the paradigms and the mind-sets that inform oppression, exploitation, domination and dehumanisation in these struggles.

Like this South African, most of the respondents in the case study mentioned that their knowledge of the Holocaust and South African apartheid sharpen their recognition of the Palestinians' circumstances and that the Israel-Palestine matter should not be viewed in isolation from other contexts. Their reasons can be summarized in three points:

Never again means never again to everybody

The respondents are deeply concerned about the risks of claiming victimhood, vulnerability, heroism and brave moral behaviour to justify Israel's repression of the Palestinians. Being outspoken on the fact that the Palestinians are one of the world's largest displaced populations due to the mass destruction, violence and exodus of 1947 to 1948, they argue that the pain of Jewish persecution does not justify Israel's infliction of pain and its dehumanisation of the Palestinians.

In line with Jewish scholars such as Shlomo Sand, Marc Ellis, Ilan Pappe and Mark Braverman the Jewish respondents are adamant that Jews are neither a "pure" race nor a homogenous people who all condone Zionism and Israel's abuses in the name of Jewishness. Hence they focus expressly on educating the Israeli public on the *Nakba*, the Right of Return and Israel's continued uprooting and destruction of Palestinians and their property over more than seven decades.[4] When they invoke the context of the Shoah the aim is not to compare the scale and depth of Jewish persecution during world War II with the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians.[5] Their intention is

4 During the Palestinians' *Nakba* (Arabic for "catastrophe") approximately 750 000 of the then 900 000 Palestinians became refugees. In Israel, the topic of the *Nakba* is almost taboo – by law. Israel does not allow Palestinian refugees to return to their properties.

5 The Jewish historian Illan Pappe (2013), for example, used reputable definitions and the contents of Israeli government papers that became available after being declassified for thirty years to show step by step how, "from planning stage to final execution, what occurred in Palestine in 1948 forms a clear-cut case … of ethnic cleansing". Since 1948 the expulsion and killing of people for nationalist reasons have continued unabatedly

not to argue whether one transgression is worse or better than the other, since they are not the same. However, they perceive the memory of the Shoah to be unjustly manipulated and abused to position Jewish suffering as superior to the suffering of others. The reason for bringing the Shoah or the Holocaust history into the equation is that one cannot suffer that way "and then think that it's okay to make other people suffer that way" (R9 2015:63). Jews, as a symbol of suffering on the earth, "cannot allow that subsequently this happens to others and we cannot allow that we as a sovereign country do it to others. This is the Judaism from where I grew up. This is the message that I get from my family" (R11 2015:9).

The respondents act because of the harm done to the Palestinians, but also because of the harm Israel inflicts on itself. Jewish Israeli respondents particularly were alarmed about their society. A patriarchal, militarist ethos protects, facilitates and advances a security paradigm in which militarisation is both a response to Jewish fear and a perpetuation of a "fear and siege" mentality, requiring them to remain in a constant "state of emergency" because "everybody is going to throw us into the sea". In their view the international community, including Germany, must help Israel to end the occupation and "to save this country from ourselves, to save us from ourselves" (R11 2015:100). Those who care for Israel and want to support it should not support double standards and discriminatory policies and practices but should put pressure on the Israeli government to end the occupation. "To condone what Israel is doing, is actually not helping Israel, it's harming Israel" (R15 2015:12). In fact, to now support Israel's ethno-nationalist agenda at the cost of another people is to repeat the same mistake that was made of discriminating against Jews in Europe, they argued. To be Jewish and to have grown up in "the shadow of the Holocaust" and to have been "victims of a terrible crime and oppression, genocide" means that one "should learn from that and be opposed to any form of oppression to anybody else" (R7 2015:16).

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and in violation of international law. Regular snapshots, articles, fact sheets, in-depth reports, maps, statistics and videos on the website of the United Nations for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the occupied Palestinian Territory (https://www.ochaopt.org/) provide ample evidence of an agenda to change permanently the demographics of the area along the lines of ethnic segregation.

Israeli apartheid must be understood in the context of international law

Several Black South Africans' personal memories of South African apartheid were reawakened during visits to occupied Palestinian territories. A Christian church leader noted that he feels "re-traumatised … when I go through the checkpoints. It's indescribable the terror that goes through you when you remember what it used to be like when I went through road blocks in South Africa" (R10 2015:45). Yet although the apartheid analogy resonates with Israeli authoritarianism, patriarchism, racism, land dispossession, the misuse of religion to justify the wholesale oppression of a people, as well as how the military and security agencies bolster these aspects, the respondents also stated clearly that a direct comparison between Israeli and South African apartheid is inappropriate due to many deep differences. The Palestinians face far greater obstacles than Black South Africans did under apartheid. Even the most racist South Africans never imagined a country without Black people; Israel can dispense of cheap Palestinian labour by acquiring migrant labour, and Israel wants all the land, but without the Palestinians. Moreover, South Africa was not defended by an "international White lobby", as Israel is, and the ongoing "barbarism" of Islam was not played off against the idea of a country as a bastion of "democracy" (R2 2015:100–102). In short, to compare Israeli apartheid to the former situation in South Africa with the aim to validate the one context as a replication of the other is an incomplete and incorrect analogy.

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (United Nations, 2002:6) defines apartheid as "the systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime". Several international bodies link Israel's policies and practices to apartheid in light of international law. A team of scholars and practitioners of international public law from South Africa, the United Kingdom, Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories, for example, concluded in an in-depth report that "[b]oth colonialism and apartheid are prohibited by international law. This Report has found strong evidence to indicate that Israel has violated, and continues to violate, both prohibitions in the occupied Palestinian territory (Human Sciences Research Council, 2009:277). Human Rights Watch (2010), in turn,

published a report titled *Israel/West Bank: Separate and Unequal*, which details Israel's discriminatory practices against Palestinians. In 2012, the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination found Israeli policies in the occupied Palestinian territories "tantamount to Apartheid" and stated that "many state policies within Israel also violate the prohibition on Apartheid as enshrined in Article 3 of the Convention" (Erakat & Madi, 2012). The Russell Tribunal (2012) made similar findings in respect of Zionist Israel,

> by reference to three core elements of the definition of apartheid as drawn from its common elements under the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (the Apartheid Convention) and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court:
>
> - the presence of two distinct racial groups
> - the commission of acts defined as "inhuman acts" of apartheid
> - the institutionalised nature of domination by one group over another.

All of these statements and reports on Israel's complicity in apartheid were issued even before Israel deepened its institutionalised racial discrimination against Christian, Muslim and other Arab Israeli citizens by adopting its blatantly undemocratic nation state law with distinct apartheid characteristics in 2018.

The particular and the general as part of a broad moral struggle

The respondents grasped that the issue is not a "conflict" between equal partners, but a systemic, socio-political, economic and militaristic oppression which benefits Israel and its allies and in which the Palestinians suffer the most. They realised that myths, false information, ignorance and naivety construct and confuse mainstream conversations on the matter.

Their rejection of a dominant hegemonic, anti-human world outlook is a notion conveyed from several angles. There are no ambiguities about the Palestinian matter as a burning, local site of othering that reverberates throughout the world, setting off alarm bells on multi-faceted tones of othering and dehumanisation elsewhere in the world. According to

the respondents the injustice against the Palestinians is part of a bigger issue. It is an issue of colonialism, occupation, apartheid, the violation of international law and economic exploitation. The dehumanisation takes the shape of power abuse, violence, war and militarism and it is part of a global, colonialist, arms industry that destroys infrastructure, uproots, displaces, imprisons and kills people. It is part of a conversation that transcends the borders of Israel-Palestine when the trails of Israeli money and ammunition, funded by the USA, lead into countries such as South Sudan and Eritrea in a global project of militarization.

Zionism, problems in their own local South African and Israeli contexts and other issues in other parts of the world are viewed as part of the same matrix of problems. Together, these struggles are perceived as part of a broader struggle for moral integrity, justice and human dignity and the Palestinian struggle becomes a prism for other struggles against othering. A similar sentiment was expressed by the 2015 Kairos statement's pointed and elaborate explanation of intersectionality between South African apartheid, South Africa's ongoing struggle for inclusivity, other struggles in the world and the Palestinian struggle. The Palestinian struggle, the statement reads, is "a microcosm of global empire, a critical site of reflection that can bring experiences in other locales into sharper focus. Palestine does not eclipse other situations around the globe but instead intensifies the need for greater interconnection and mutual engagement." (Kairos 2015). The abuse of power, militarism, the fanning of fear, religious fundamentalism and manipulation, greed, racism, classism, sexism and neoliberalism are all seen as forming part of a polarising ethos used to justify oppression. Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia and discrimination against Arabs and Blacks can neither be tolerated nor be used as excuses to oppress another group of people and thereby to perpetuate the dynamics of othering. Respondents argued that these points of tangency heighten the global imperative for a just peace in Palestine-Israel.

Thus, their views reflected a constant fluctuation between the particular and the general, or the relevance of the immediate in the shape of the self and one's own society, and the relevance of an extended identity, other struggles and a global consciousness. A Jewish Israeli sees himself one of many like-minded people who share the same world-view and who participate in projects that occur "parallel to this struggle here".

These people "don't care just about the Palestinians...they care about the refugees in their own countries and they care about the gap between rich and poor in their community" (R19 2015:73–74). Or, as a South African put it: "You can't be in solidarity with Palestinians but turn a blind eye to other struggles and to the contradictions in our own society, including the wrong, corruption and nepotism and inequality" (R1 2015:129).

It is this holistic perspective, rather than nationalism or a desire to privilege race, religion or one cause at the cost of another, that inspires them. Their point of departure is not a national state, but the moral state between people from different orientations that should also be realised in equal, dignified political, legal, economic, religious, urban and other rights. They advocate against exceptionalism, racism, state-sanctioned violence, colonialism and religious fundamentalism of all kinds including anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and Zionism. As such, their advocacy is driven by their strong desire for consistent moral integrity no matter who the victim is. Their they do not side with a people or an ideology, but with inclusively positioned values. A Christian, a Muslim and someone who regards himself as an admirer of all religious traditions that espouses inclusive compassion respectively, for example, phrased their sentiments as follows:

> We must not say that, oh, because they are Christians, we must now stand more with them than with other people, who are Muslim. A Christian child and a Muslim child that gets killed, honestly in God's eyes, there are no differences, I cannot see it. Unless there is something that I don't see. But I am a hundred per cent convinced in my soul, in my mind, in my heart that God cares as deeply for the Muslim child as God cares for the Christian child. (R8 2015:55)

> Let's say Palestinians were to begin their liberation tomorrow and were to exact unjust revenge on Jewish Israelis. From that perspective, my solidarity should immediately change from Palestinians to Jewish Israelis or to Jews at the time. And so, it is that kind of notion. (R3 2015:37)

> The struggle against racism, what Edward Said tried to tell us about Orientalism and the other, the context of our country, the xenophobia, all of that forms a particular matrix in my mind. They are not separate issues. Fighting xenophobia in our country, or

> fighting for the rights of refugees in Europe …or fighting against Islamophobia …understanding how the arms trade works …the role of the US and of Israel, all of that [is] linked in very definite ways in my mind, not just in a visceral, emotional, sentimental way, but through my scholarship around neo-liberalism today, corporate globalisation. What are the building blocks? It's not just economics. It is culture, it is aesthetics, it is about how do we humanise a human condition. What do we value? (R1 2015:73)

The respondents did not assume a deadlock when it comes to the Israel-Palestinian matter – there are several options. They view the injustice against the Palestinians as something that should resonate with everyone, for having a conscience and rising up for the other, especially the marginalised, is what makes us ethical and moral beings. The essence of this response lies in understanding what it means "to be human in the ethical and also...in the theological sense" (R2 2015:16). Thus, they embraced the human ability to discern and to act in accordance with their desire to apply the same values under all circumstances. John de Gruchy's process of sensitisation in respect of Israel and the Palestinians portrayed similar core insights based on a desire for both personal and social integrity.

5. Conclusion

A scientific exploration of the extent to which the Palestine-Israel matter relates to other struggles is credible, transferable, dependable and usable when it focuses on the meta-narratives in determining possible connections between the nature and the dynamics of systems of discrimination or disadvantage and any concomitant ideologies, paradigms and practices. The discussion of differences and similarities between the Palestinian struggle and the struggles against South African apartheid and Nazism show alarming overlaps between these contexts. Moreover, the intersectional approach of consistency, honesty and integrity by De Gruchy and the research respondents has moral implications too. The same ethical questions need to be asked in different contexts and in the context of Israel-Palestine they warn against the dangers of selective compassion and divisible justice that prefers one people over another. In short, to be progressive on human rights matters, except for Palestine, is regarded

just as irresponsible, shameful and unjust as it is to be progressive only on Palestine.

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