

Towards a Grieving Church: Theo-ethical considerations for homophobic violence in South Africa

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Hetero-masculine violence in South Africa continues to be an obstacle to peace. As indicated by crime statistics in South Africa, heterosexual women, heterosexual men and LGBTQI+ community have been victims of murder. Many continue to be victims of sexual violence as a result of hetero-masculine violence. While some Christian confessional traditions in South Africa have evolved and have become more welcoming to the LGBTQI+ community, this evolution has not made much difference to the public violence the LGBTQI+ community is exposed to in South Africa. Using the intersections of Caputo's radical ethics and Meiring's body theology, I propose a new theological framework that will assist and encourage confessional ecclesiological traditions in South Africa to deal with their own internal contradictions influenced by masculinist heterosexual discourse. This is an attempt to meaningfully contribute to the discourse on violence experienced by the LGBTQI+ community in South Africa. This article contends that the intersections of body theology and radical ethics assist ecclesiological traditions to recognise and embrace the fragility of metaphysics even in the face of discomfort. I argue that the exercise of continuously embracing the fragility of metaphysics assists ecclesiological traditions to be open to their own flaws. This gives them an authentic voice to constantly reconstruct and effectively speak out against the rejection of and violence perpetuated against the LGBTQI+ community in South Africa.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: This paper draws on conversations from Christian theology, ethics and their engagement with LGBTQI+ and public homophobic violence in South Africa.

Keywords: LGBTQI+; metaphysics; ecclesiological confessions; radical ethics; body theology; masculine violence; theological anthropology; ethics.

Introduction

Homophobic violence and discrimination in South Africa continue to be an obstacle to peace. The wounded and slain bodies of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex (LGBTQI+) individuals such as the late Lindokuhle Cele, Sphamandla Khoza, Pinky Shongwe, and many others have left indelible marks in our memories. It is important to recognise the prevalence of gender and sexual violence in South Africa. According to the South African Police Service (SAPS), 6289 murders and 10512 rape cases were recorded for the first quarter of 2023 (Cele 2023). What is most notable, however, is the fact that these statistics do not expose the counts of murder and violence perpetrated as a result of homophobia in South Africa. Recognising the importance of exposing the counts of these murders and how they occur, violence and murder as a result of homophobia are not usually listed as a category such as carjacking, assault, robbery and others.

The nature of these statistics is considered important in a country where the majority of citizens are affiliated with Christianity. The discourse in this paper is signified by the context in which ecclesiological Christian traditions and Christian beliefs have wrestled with the acceptance of the LGBTQI+ identifying individuals in South Africa.¹ This wrestling, I contend, contributes to metaphysical violence perpetrated against LGBTQI+ identifying individuals. One of the key themes in Langa's study on township masculinities in Alexandria was the depiction of same-sex relations as un-Christian (Langa 2020). According to Langa, all participants in his study believed that discrimination experienced by gay boys at school was valid. It is important to note that this discourse is not new. Van Klinken (2016:112) exposes anti-same sex sentiments that have been prevalent in African Christian circles such as the Pentecostal tradition. In light of the spate of violence experienced by the LGBTQI+ community, the crucial question this paper seeks to address

1. Ecclesiological discomfort with same sex relations is discussed later in the paper.

is the extent to which ecclesiological Christian traditions in South Africa publicly legitimise violence enacted against LGBTQI+ in their communities.

In an effort to address discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in Christian churches in South Africa, a number of academic discourses have made significant contributions to this pressing issue. Davids (2020:301–317) proposes that Christian ecclesiological traditions such as the United Reformed Church of South Africa use the Belhar Confession as an inclusive hermeneutical approach in dealing with discrimination perpetrated against LGBTQI+ identified individuals. Mtshitselwa (2010:767–789) points out his challenge with the textual interpretations of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 in the Methodist Church of South Africa. Mtshitselwa's textual problem with this is the rejection of same-sex relationships using these texts without taking into account the socio-historical context of the text and its relevance for a contemporary society. Noting this particular challenge, Mtshitselwa calls for an African centred hermeneutics with regard to same-sex relationships that will be sensitive to the realities of the African context. The preference for African-centred hermeneutics by Mtshitselwa is pursued because such an approach centralises the significance of human relationships and interaction, a common principle in African life.

Similar to Robertson and Nadar (2021:1–16) who question queer theological and biblical ecclesial research conducted from the premise of creeds and policies, this paper concerns itself with the extent to which these enable masculine heterosexist violence and discrimination against the LGBTQI+ community. In an attempt to address marginalisation the LGBTQI+ community is exposed to, Robertson and Nadar propose ecclesial research premised on institutional culture that allows itself to be informed and transformed by bodies it excludes. The paper questions the extent to which a particular hermeneutical framework centred around specific texts allows itself to acknowledge and act against its metaphysical failures. This is in its attempt to address discrimination and violence meted out against the LGBTQI+ individuals in South Africa.

This paper concerns itself with the fragility of text and meaning metaphysically in as far as the lives of the LGBTQI+ individuals are concerned. The very premise of institutional policies is shaken by metaphysical fragility as exposed by what Caputo calls the 'flux'.² The very foundation upon which institutional culture allows the ecclesia to shape and transform it is found wanting in the face of the flux as noted in Robertson and Nadar (2021).

Recognising the wounds and slain bodies of the LGBTQI+ members as an important primary theological source, I argue that violence enacted against the LGBTQI+ identifying

2.The flux can be defined as state of change or an event in time which the language of metaphysics cannot account for because of its limitations. It is the moment in time that presents itself as a disturbance to the rigidity of metaphysics. The state of such a moment of disturbance is one which exposes the flaws of truth and meaning as we know it, and the premise upon which these are built.

individuals in the public and in some confessional ecclesiological traditions in South Africa have one thing in common: the failure to grieve metaphysical fragility.³ Using Caputo's ethics of dissemination, I argue that hetero-masculine violence perpetrated against LGBTQI+ individuals in the public and ecclesiological traditions in South Africa is produced by a firm grip unto the dead flesh of an ethic of masculine metaphysics. This I do firstly, by introducing Caputo's radical ethics. Secondly, I discuss the notion of masculine ethos and violence perpetrated against LGBTQI+ individuals. Thirdly, I discuss the contribution of Mering's body theology called *Theology of the Flesh* to this discourse (Meiring 2016). Fourthly, I provide a brief discussion of the relationship between different ecclesiological confessional traditions in South Africa and propose a new theological framework that will assist ecclesiological confessional traditions dealing with their challenges. Challenges in this instance are with specific reference to the LGBTQI+ community.

This paper makes a theological contribution by proposing a theological-anthropological framework grounded in John Caputo's ethic of dissemination and Jacob Meiring's body theology in the analysis of violence perpetuated against the LGBTQI+ community. I argue that the intersections of Meiring's body theology and Caputo's radical ethics are3 one considered way churches can overcome their internal contradictions. The internal contradiction refers to the discrimination church traditions enact against LGBTQI+ community while speaking out against the public violence experienced by this community. This, I contend, will positively contribute to discourse around masculine violence expressed towards the LGBTQI+ in South Africa.

Caputo's radical ethics and/or ethics of dissemination

Caputo's ethic of dissemination is situated within his radical hermeneutics that is concerned with the floundering of metaphysics (Caputo 1987). The central critique Caputo offers in his radical hermeneutics against metaphysics is its inability to capture absoluteness of life in time. For Caputo, this is exposed by what he calls the flux: that which exposes the deep-seated flaws of metaphysics and its attempts to imprison life within its frameworks of meaning and truth. Caputo's problem with metaphysics is its comfortability with itself in the face of the flux: avoiding the difficulties that always threaten its constructs of meaning, truth and reality.⁴ It is within the face of a crumbling metaphysics that Caputo introduces this ethic of dissemination. This is an ethic that exposes itself to the flux by embracing it. It is an ethic that is constantly subjected to the flux. He develops this ethic of dissemination in his book entitled 'Against

3.Metaphysical fragility refers to the state of metaphysical instability that is constantly exposed and challenged by the flux. In the context of church tradition, the concept of metaphysical fragility is used to describe the nature of church doctrines, laws and their formation, and their metaphysical weaknesses.

4.In philosophy, the 'flux' is a term that has been used to describe the constant change of things in life. The philosopher who made use of the term was Heraclitus.

Ethics' (Caputo 1993). Caputo attempts to separate his ethic of dissemination from a metaphysical ethic, usually constructed in the form of ethical theories (Caputo 1993).

Caputo's problem with metaphysical ethics presented as universal ethical theories is that they imprison the possibilities of life. They exist as a way of subverting the flux and seeking comfort in the face of other possibilities (Caputo 1987). The flux is a phenomenon that metaphysics fails to grasp because of its incapacity. The flux is the moment in time where and when metaphysics fails to capture the experience of life through its language and understanding of truth. Thus, for Caputo an ethic of dissemination therefore is coming to terms with the failures of metaphysics in the ethical sense. It is embracing life, living and learning how to live it in the constant and endless crumbling of metaphysics. He also separates his ethic from Martin Heidegger's primordial ethic, an ethic that seeks comfort in the eschatological visions of history (Heidegger 1972). Heidegger's primordial ethic is the attempt to revert to historical ways of living in aspiration of a coming future. Caputo's criticism against such an ethic is its failure to recognise disagreements, assuming unity in history and ignoring those who are excluded by history.

For Caputo, an ethic of dissemination is a radical ethic that allows other voices through the cracks of metaphysics (Caputo 1987). These voices come from queer, blacks, and women. These voices challenge the realities of metaphysics. According to Caputo (1987):

The task of Radical Ethics is to disrupt that momentum, to assert difference, to preserve the right to dissent, to allow the idiosyncratic its rights. This is done to remain true to the flux. (p. 261)

Caputo's ethic of dissemination calls upon ethics and ethical theory even within the context of the body, to come to grief. Caputo (1993), who is firmly against ethics, that is, metaphysical ethics, calls for its deconstruction. He exposes the fact that names are metaphysically constructed and carry experiences of particular times and places. Metaphysics fails when it attempts to transmit these names as generalisations when it encounters the flux. For Caputo, the use of these generalisations in the face of the flux is an attempt to hide from time and experience. It is this failure of metaphysics that forces Caputo to stand against ethics, that is, against metaphysical ethics. According to him, obligations that are called for by moral principles constructed by metaphysics therefore are counterfeit obligations. For Caputo, obligations are open ended. They are an alarm, with no owner, not justified by reason but responds to disaster because of the failures of metaphysics. They respond to the flux.

It is for this reason that he is of the view that we call into question the names of justice from the context of ethics (Caputo 1993). This is because the term 'justice' usually has a

metaphysical frame. For him, justice always requires one to ask the question of 'what?' as a form of recognition of the weakness of its metaphysical frame. Justice is not just an act. Engaging justice in this sense requires a deep critical reflection and internal analysis of metaphysical cracks within the self before making any attempt to remain true to the idea of justice. Admittedly, Caputo's ethic of dissemination acknowledges that the word 'justice' is slippery. It is so slippery that when we act, we do nothing but always attempt to get to the true idea of the word. This for him is one way of doing ethics: doing ethics in grief of metaphysical ethics. This can of course be extended to other key terms in ethics such as love, hope and others.

In his book entitled *The prayers and the tears of Jacques Derrida*, Caputo (1997) advances the idea of the messianic as a necessary form without content. He criticises ethics as that which sets guidelines, patrols and protects particular ideations of the messianic in order to prevent the metaphysically different. For Caputo, ethics prevents the impossible messianic possibility from shattering its metaphysical fragility. In this notion of the messianic without content, he recognises the contribution of bodies that have passed on and how they contribute to the messianic without content. This is reflected by what he calls 'hauntology'. Describing justice in the context of a messianic without content, Caputo (1997) says the following:

For justice means responsibility, and we are responsible to the dead, to their dying and heritage they inherited through their death, as well as the not yet born. (p. 121)

In no way is this determinable messianism for him in the sense that these dead bodies and the 'not yet born' form the messianic content. It is the way these very bodies, the lived experiences of the dead and the not yet born call us to account and have the ability to shatter what he calls determinable messianisms.

What should be noted is that determinable messianism is comprised of a particular metaphysics with ideations (Caputo 1997). Determinable messianisms can be defined as idealised messianisms, that exclude and marginalise. The central challenge for Caputo with determinable messianism is the extent to which the limitations and boundaries of such ideations protected by ethics, legitimise injustice (Caputo 1997). Its legitimisation of injustice is its inability to capture the future and its possibilities of meaning in time. Taking Caputo's ethic of dissemination into account, this article is concerned with a masculine ethic, a way of being and acting from the masculine.

Masculine ethos in South Africa

In South Africa, traces of a masculine ethos can be identified in Zenani who clearly outlined the roles of a man in ancient Xhosa Culture. According to Zenani 'Life begins with a man' (Zenani 1992). According to Zenani, it is the man, who is the leader and the initiator of the home. It is a man who gives guidance (Zenani 1992).

Zenani's experiences could be compared to the complexity of Zulu manhood in the work of Waetjen (2004) who outlines some difficulties of Zulu men in colonial South Africa. These men were marginalised by the migrant labour system and lost their authority and a sense of identity (Waetjen 2004). According to Waetjen, the existence of Inkatha Freedom Party was premised on the political restoration of the dignity of the Zulu man in the home. This was a form of resistance against colonialism. Critical to note therefore is that a metaphysical masculine ethos is an ethos constructed from a particular understanding of being, that is masculine informed by time, experience, context and culture.

Walker's advocacy for a constitutional sexuality at best exposes the nature of the masculine ethos in a post-apartheid South Africa (Walker 2005:225). A masculine ethos from the Constitution of South Africa could be described as a masculinity that is fundamentally premised and informed by the Constitution of South Africa. Walker for instance argues that masculine violence in South Africa is prevalent because traditional or indigenous conceptions of masculinities are struggling to adjust to a new democratic dispensation or to the new South African constitutional ideals. Walker contends that notions such as gender equality in a post-apartheid South Africa have created a crisis for traditional masculinities by transgressing traditional indigenous gender roles. The complexities of the notion of a masculine ethos are also exposed by Xaba (2001:105–123) who unmasks how 'struggle masculinities' became problematic in the new South African constitutional dispensation. According to Xaba, 'struggle masculinities' refer to strong and liberation masculinities which became subordinated in a post-apartheid South Africa. According to Xaba (2001), this subordination was stimulated by the birth of 'post-struggle masculinities' which dominated after 1994 and was legitimised by the constitution.

Xaba (2001:105–123) asserts that the new democratic dispensation in South Africa required education and qualifications in order to get employment. As a result of this, Xaba asserts that struggle masculinities suffered significantly as their main purpose was liberation not education before 1994. According to Xaba, in a post-apartheid South Africa, men who were part of the liberation struggle but did not have an education, failed to secure meaningful employment and therefore failed to provide for their families as head of homes. Xaba argues that these men became delinquents and resorted to crime in this 1994 democratic dispensation in order to provide for themselves and for their families. This is because providence was deeply attached to how they understood their manhood and what they were supposed to do.

Considering the LGBTQ+ community, Langa (2020) notes how heterosexual boys avoided the company of gay boys to avoid being labelled as gay by heterosexual girls. Masculinity for these boys was attached to their actions, one of these being avoiding gay boys. It is by recognising the importance

of gender differences in South Africa that I argue that masculine violence enacted against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual (LGBTQIA+) in South Africa is the hold unto the dead metaphysical flesh of a primordial masculine ethos. This I argue, is an attempt to subvert the flux.

Masculine violence and LGBTQ+ community in South Africa

South Africa continues to face the ever-present reality of hate crimes perpetuated against the LGBTQ+ community. Bonang Gaelae, Nonhlanla Kunene, Nathaniel 'Sspokoane' Mbele, Khulekani Gomazi, Phelokazi Mqathana and many others are the names we remember when we think of hate crimes perpetuated against the LGBTQ+ community in South Africa. What should be crucial to note is the difficult realities of tracing reliable statistics of hate crimes perpetuated against the LGBTQ+ in South Africa. This is because of a number of reasons that include but are not limited to the number of crimes related to sexual orientation reported to the SAPS and the failure of SAPS to include hate crime as a result of sexual orientation in their statistical reports. According to Jeffery (2021), approximately 42 hate crimes were committed against the LGBTQ+ community in 2021. Out of the 42 then pending cases, 30 were for murder and 12 were for rape. What should be considered in the context of gender and sexual violence in South Africa is that they are not only under-reported but not many are successfully prosecuted (Machisa et al. 2017).

This suggests that statistics around rape and sexual victimisation are not reliable. Mgozeli and Duma (2020: 11–13) expose the reason why men feared reporting sexual violence to the SAPS. According to Mgozeli and Duma, these reasons included but were not limited to the fear of experiencing homophobia at police stations, the fear of being stigmatised, and the fear of being ridiculed.

In his deliberations on why it was difficult to deal with same-sex crimes, Jeffery (2021) suggested that crimes perpetuated against LGBTQ+ identifying individuals continue to be perpetuated because of three reasons. The first reason he provides is that such violence is perpetuated because of societal attitudes, which are anti-LGBTQ+. The second reason he provides is that information about such crime is not being brought forward to the SAPS. The third reason he provides is that there is a difficulty of implementing policies and laws that protect the LGBTQ+ community. Jeffery's claims should be viewed in light of a South Africa that has experienced these crimes despite having a constitution that protects its citizens on the basis of sexual orientation and gender difference.

Various social institutions such as the SAPS and prominent leaders in the country have in fact expressed this masculine ethos of metaphysical violence. This is exposed by secondary victimisation the LGBTQ+ community is subjected to by the

SAPS. This ethos of metaphysical violence enacted against the LGBTQI+ community is best expressed by a metaphysics, which attempts to subvert Caputo's flux. Gordons (2018:71) exposes this by using the experience of two dating lesbian women in Soweto who were brutally attacked because they were lesbian. According to Gordons, when reporting this crime, the police officer who assisted this couple noted that the complainant was 'So beautiful to be gay'. The view of the police officer carries the implicit assumption that being lesbian is not appropriate. Gordon notes that the complainant was arrested for one night without food because of a counter charge and the case was subsequently withdrawn without notifying the complainant.

Such a fierce claim subjects not only lesbians but gay and bisexual men to imperial masculine metaphysical ethos that attempts to subvert that which it cannot grasp or understand. This masculine metaphysical ethos is a moral construct firmly premised on ontological descriptions and beliefs of the masculine in South Africa of a particular time. Caputo's concern about the staleness and the failures of metaphysics in his radical hermeneutics and his critique of ethics is what I consider critical in the context of masculine violence in South Africa. This is because of the violent consequences of a masculine metaphysical ethos that the LGBTQI+ community has been exposed to in South Africa. The vulnerability of hetero-masculine ethos is exposed by its inability to capture life fully and attempting to hide behind reasons it constructs to justify its failure to come to terms with someone its metaphysics cannot comprehend. This is something its metaphysics is unable to account for. Such attempts to subvert the flux have significant ethical implications for South Africa considering the counts of crime experienced by LGBTQI+ identifying individuals because the SAPS is a critical part of our criminal justice system.

Masculine metaphysical violence is exposed by the words that were made by Former President Jacob Zuma in Kwa Dukuza at a Heritage Day celebration in 2006. According to News24 (2006), these were the words of the former president:

When I was growing up, an Ungqingili (a gay man) would not have stood in front of me. I would knock him out. (n.p.)

What should be critical to note about this statement of the former President is that hegemonic masculine violence is directly used to subvert what the metaphysical ethos cannot account for. This is the point where masculine metaphysics flounders. This metaphysical masculine ethos in this case attempts to subvert the flux using violence. In the case of Ungqingili, it assumes gay to be an alien to the masculine. Alien in this sense refers to alien from hegemonic hetero-masculine framework that assumes hetero-sexist normativity as concrete. Such hetero-sexist normativity is usually expressed in private and public life in South Africa.

Grief of metaphysical masculinities in the flux

Attempts to avoid what this masculine metaphysics and ethos cannot grasp are at best expressed by the type of crimes the LGBTQI community is exposed to. Gordon (2018:70) who uses the case study of two lesbian women in Soweto provides two possible reasons for their victimisation. According to Gordon, the first is sexual unavailability expressed by the rejection of romantic advances of the perpetrators and for the complainant being too masculine. Critical within this context is that hegemonic metaphysical masculine ethos absolutely claims masculinity. Masculinity as metaphysically conceived by those who adhere to its ethos cannot be expressed by women and should not be expressed by women. This can be attributed to cultural norms and values in Africa where the man is masculine and the head of the home as one can note in Hadebe (2010).

Same-sex relations, however, have problematised these notions of gender and sexuality in the colonial-contemporary African context. This placed social arrangements according to gender in Africa in crisis. The expression of this metaphysical masculine crisis is best expressed through two hate crimes with contrasting nuances in South Africa. The first is corrective rape and the second is gay bashing. According to Di Silvio (2011:1469), corrective rape is a term used to describe the act of correcting a woman's sexual orientation and subordinating them to 'womanhood', believing that homosexuality is a white disease. Zukiswa Gaca was followed by a man who knew she was lesbian, and this man raped her in the midst of his friend and claimed that he was going to show her that she was a woman (Carter 2013).

Contrastingly, gay bashing presents a different nuance of masculine violence in South Africa. Mfundo Ngobese recalls the words of men who assaulted him (De Barroz 2022):

They kept on saying, they hate gays, I believed I was being punished for my sexuality. (n.p.)

Lulu Ntuthela was found in a shallow grave after being humiliated for his sexual orientation the previous day (Maurice 2021). It is important to note that Musa Xulu was shot dead in broad day light on Freedom Day for being gay (Singh 2022).

Gay men and bisexual men are seen as traitors of the hegemonic metaphysical masculine ethos in South Africa. Although gay men are also raped, not all experience homophobic violence through rape. Hetero-masculine violence is also expressed as a form of disdain and disgust to a different masculinity with the same biological framework; a man with a penis who alters the binary epistemological framework of hetero-masculinity. Being gay, bisexual and transgender alters these binary masculine epistemological frameworks and in turn challenges the hegemonic heteropatriarchal masculine ethos. The crucial concern is

whether ecclesiological theological confessions can act against institutional and structural violence experienced by the LGBTQI+ community. If they can act, the question that should be asked is, why does such critique not have sustainable influence of pervasive hetero-masculine violence enacted against the LGBTQIA+ community in South Africa?

Confessional ecclesiological traditions and the LGBTQI+ community in South Africa

The LGBTQI+ community in South Africa had a turbulent relationship with the Christian church that has evolved and continues to evolve over the years. For some, this relationship has moved from rejection, tolerance to acceptance in many denominational confessional traditions. Focussing on evolving mainline ecclesiological theologies, turbulence experienced by the LGBTQI+ community can be noted in Mtshitshelwa (2010:769–787) who was highly critical of the Methodist Church's interpretation of Leviticus 8:22 which forbids 'Men laying with other men as with a woman'. Davids (2020:301–317) exposes this turbulent experience in the URSCA by proposing a hermeneutical framework which utilises the Belhar confession as its basis for being inclusive to the LGBTQI+ community. Robertson and Nadar (2021:1–16) note how ecclesiological research is centred around heteronormative policies and how their implementation excludes queer individuals. Robertson and Nadar argue for the utilisation of a transformative research approach focussing on institutional culture instead of policy in ecclesiological traditions. According to Robertson and Nadar, research informed by institutional culture takes note of the experiences of that which enters a particular institution and is excluded by it. These observations allow these experiences to inform and shape its transformation.

What is critical to note is the difficulty of the Church to be firmly vocal about masculine violence perpetuated against the LGBTQI+ community. An example of this can be noted in Anglican Church's refusal to bless same-sex marriages while Archbishop Makgoba wrote a letter to the Anglican Church of Uganda criticising the country's anti-LGBTQI+ bill (Igual 2023). It is plausible therefore to note that ecclesiological confessions centred around heteronormative policies and practices are prisoners of hetero-masculine metaphysical ills in time: in contradiction to what Caputo calls the flux. This reluctance of acknowledging the flux has caused these ecclesiological traditions to bear the internal contradictions of their rebuke to violence and their exclusion of the LGBTQI+ as pointed out in the case of the Anglican Church. This is done by uplifting an ideo-hetero privileged historicist confessional morality. The ideo-privileged historicist confessional morality that many ecclesiological traditions support are centred on the creation doctrine of hetero-binarism: God, created male(hetero) and female(hetero).

What must be noted is that theological evolution within confessional theologies have become the way of subverting this flux. This is noted in the perpetual struggle of confessional theologies over the years with the acceptance, marriage and the ordination of LGBTQI+ individuals in their denominational confines. The evolution to the acceptance of gay pastors within the Dutch Reformed Church is evident in the work of Van Loggenberg (2015:1–9). In as early as 2010, Reverend Ecclesia Delange's ministry was cut short in the Methodist Church of South Africa after she notified the Church of her intention to get married to her partner (Dlamini 2019:61). Critical to note is that confessional theologies have evolved over the years and have become more accepting of the LGBTQI+. It must be noted that consequently, congregants from various church traditions have also become more accepting of LGBTQI+ individuals and community (Kotze & Loubser 2018). What must be noted is that little change has been effected from this evolution in as far as violence experienced by the LGBTQIA+ community is concerned.

The central critique of this paper, however, is how ecclesiological traditions in South Africa have become victims of the ills of masculine metaphysics in time. These hetero-masculine metaphysical ills are birthed from historicist confessional moralism where historical doctrines are theologically clarified over a period of years for their own heteronormative sake in tolerance of the LGBTQI+ community. This is exposed by the progression and evolving nature of beliefs and doctrines around issues of sex and gender. Hetero-masculine history expressed by a contemporary historicist confessional morality is not held accountable for its metaphysical flaws. It escapes the flux through theological evolution as noted in confessional theologies and theologies in African Independent Churches. For the African Independent Churches, this is exposed by the theology of hetero-male headship that has subjected women to discrimination and violence, evolving to a more tolerant atmosphere that is largely still patriarchal (Molobi 2008:1–14).

The challenge with historicist confessional morality can be likened to the challenge Caputo has with Gadamer's framework of truth: the assumption of progress from foundation (Caputo 1987). This is its failure to come to grief when it is exposed by the flux. Confessional historicist morality crumbles in the face of the flux. Relying on Mering's body theology which calls our attention to the corporeal turn, my contention is that similarly to Caputo, there should be great caution against metaphysical complacency in as far as the body is concerned.

Caputo's concern with the problem of the failure of metaphysics in the face of the flux and Meiring's corporeal turn to the body in theological anthropology have similarities. Firstly, both are uncomfortable with the failures of metaphysics (Caputo 1987). Secondly, while Caputo's ethic recognises the uncomfortable necessity of metaphysical grief, Meiring's body theology cautions us against the fragility of

ontological descriptions of the bodies in theological anthropology (Meiring 2016). Meiring suggests that the solution to this issue is to recognise the body and its experiences by asking questions about the body in pursuit of discovery. It is by using the intersections of both Caputo's ethic of dissemination and Meiring's body theology that I propose a new theological framework that will assist the church in dealing with its own internal contradictions in as far as violence is concerned. This is particularly as it relates to the LBTQI+ community in South Africa.

Meiring's body theology

Mering introduces us to a body theology of embodied sensing (Meiring 2014). In his theology, he uses an interdisciplinary approach to recognise and affirm bodily experiences and their contribution to theological discourse. The theological anthropology of Mering recognises the body and its experience as sources of knowledge: making the effort to listen to the body and its experiences in relation to creation (Meiring 2016:5–8). Using an interdisciplinary approach towards understanding the body, Meiring contends that bodily insights through experience provide critical insights and avenues of engagement.

Meiring's body theology is premised on three pillars. The very first pillar is the role language plays in theology. For Meiring (2016:1–8), language is made up of words that capture particular experiences of lived bodies. He argues that it is for this reason that language cannot objectify the body but must be subject to it theologically. This suggests that language should be under scrutiny in theology when it comes to evaluation of the body. The failure to constantly question language in theology makes it an imperial enterprise. This becomes a significant disadvantage to the learning experience and development of theology. For Mering, because language fails to capture all experiences, listening to the body becomes critical in the context of theologising about notions of sin and other notions in the Christian discourse.

The second pillar of Meiring's body theology is the 'lived body' (Meiring 2014). For Meiring, the body is a source of knowledge and revelation. For Meiring, the body is not just a mere sociological construct but a subject of other faculties and sciences such as biochemistry, natural science, and psychology. He notes that the body interacts with animals and other bodies. This requires that the body be listened to attentively in theology. The third pillar of Meiring's body theology is his concept of 'More Than'. Understanding the failures of language and the body as a lived experience requires us to be careful of how we think of others. There is more than one body in the world with different experiences. This means that bodies are not homogeneous. This particularity requires careful consideration in judgement about other bodies.

Central to Meiring's body theology is the corporeal turn (Meiring 2014). According to Meiring, the corporeal turn is

that which is deeply critical of the mind-body discourse wherein the body is taken for granted while the mind is granted superiority over the body as a result of cartesian dualism. According to Meiring, theoretical frameworks produced by the cartesian dualism take for granted the bodily experiences. Meiring (2014) makes use of Sheet-Johnstone who sees the corporeal turn as a discourse of an open-ended continual spiral of gaining understanding that produces more questions about the body. Meiring contends that, not only is the corporeal turn within body theology dependent on experiences of the body but is also an interdisciplinary exercise. What is important for him then is the intersections of a theological anthropology, its groundings, and the complex relations it has with the body in light of the corporeal turn. Similar to Caputo in his ethics of dissemination, Meiring's body theology calls into question the metaphysical complacency in theological anthropology in as far as the complexities and the makeup of the body is concerned.

Merring's body theology is very important considering the way in which the bodies of LGBTQIA+ identifying individuals are viewed. Recognising his theological anthropology and its relationship with the body, the crucial question is: to what extent has the church in South Africa transgressed the body and prioritised the goals of cartesian dualism that signifies the mind over the body?

This paper that makes use of Meiring's body theology calls into question a theological anthropology that is not interdisciplinary in as far as the bodies of the LGBTQI+ individuals are concerned. Then, relying on Meiring (2014) and Caputo's ethic of dissemination: this paper problematises the metaphysical complacency of the Church in South Africa when it comes to the bodies of LGBTQIA+ identifying individuals. I contend that it is precisely the prioritisation of cartesian dualism that has made the church complicit in hetero-masculine violence enacted towards people in the LGBTQIA plus community.

Theological framework using body theology and Caputo's ethic of dissemination in the analysis of masculine violence in South Africa

If confessional ecclesiological traditions want to meaningfully contribute towards discourses centred around the alleviation of hetero-masculine violence, such theologies and theologies in African Independent Churches, doctrinally speaking must be able to grieve. In the face of the flux, heteronormative doctrines must grieve. In the attempt to address issues related to same-sex relations, confessional ecclesiological traditions have made progressive decisions without acknowledging the metaphysical fragility of doctrines and traditions. They have not owned the existing possibility of constant metaphysical failure of their doctrines and traditions in decision making. It is because of this that the correction of a particular belief

through development or progression can be confused with the grieving of a church on a particular issue such as same-sex relations. This is not grief.

Grief in Caputo's sense means becoming vulnerable by acknowledging the shortcomings of the tools one uses to make sense of life. For Caputo, for instance, each human must forge a way of living, this is inevitable regardless of how that takes place. There are certain tools such as language, sense and other factors that help us to capture meaning and understanding of life to survive. Metaphysical grief in this sense means to clearly understand that these tools we use to make sense of life, the ones we cannot live without, are frail and incapable of capturing life in its entirety. Noting one of Meiring's pillars of body theology, these tools are products of experiences in particular contexts and historical periods that cannot account for other contexts and all disciplinary discourses on the body. These tools are always victims of time as noted by Caputo despite their necessity and both by context and diverse interdisciplinary discourse on the body as noted by Meiring. In an ethic of dissemination, metaphysical grief means embracing this discomfort where the fragility of language and sense in the formation of knowledge production is constantly exposed by change in time. Metaphysical grief in the sense of the Church in South Africa requires that one accepts the impossibility of living without language and sense in forging ways of living while acknowledging their constant metaphysical shortcomings.

Grief for confessional theologies is an acknowledgment of the failure of theological language to capture a universal human experience. It is the acknowledgement of the failure to live up to justice in Caputo's sense of the word because of the weaknesses of metaphysics. Grief for confessional theologies requires that the bodies of LGBTQI+ individuals be recognised as sources of knowledge and revelation. Grief means acknowledging metaphysical failure and being open to the flux. Recognising Robertson and Nadar (2021:1–16) grief means, the acknowledgement of the Theo-ideological compromises that are the source of metaphysical violence.

A grieving church is a church that constantly acknowledges the metaphysical fragility of its doctrines. A grieving church is a church that mourns the inhumanity that is caused by the metaphysical fragility of its confessional tradition and doctrines. It is a mourning of constant metaphysical failure in the face of the flux, a mourning constantly inspired by the intentions of justice whatever justice might mean. This ethic according to Caputo, is an ethic of humility in the face of a metaphysical tornado. Such a theological orientation is inspired by intentions such as love but recognises the very fragility of the enactment of such terms. It is a prophetic love that requires observation and attentive listening.

Concluding remarks

This paper sought to expose the challenges of masculine violence that is not only a public phenomenon but an

ecclesiological one too. This has forced heteronormative ecclesiological traditions to bear with the internal contradictions of their views against homophobic violence and exclusive practices they enact against the LGBTQIA+ community. These contradictions even as they take a progressive and evolutionary posture I argue are a way of subverting what Caputo calls the flux. Using Caputo's ethic of dissemination and Meiring's body theology, I argue for the adoption of a Theo-moral framework of ecclesiological traditions that will always allow itself to be deformed by the flux. This is because the flux exposes ideo-metaphysical flaws in its engagement with society. This exposure embraces the discomfort of metaphysical flaws within church tradition and church doctrine. It is only this posture, a posture of an ethic of dissemination that will allow the church to be effective in its engagement about violence against the LGBTQI+ community.

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