

Designing a Religious Pedagogical Communicative Methodology: A Transformative Reciprocal Methodology for Religious Pedagogical work with Gangsters

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1. Introduction

Macmaster's (2003:60) insights into the phenomenon of *gangsterism* in our society make an important contribution to practical theology. *Gangsterism* is a common reality, which traumatises the lives of peoples in the poorer suburbs of the Cape Peninsula on a daily basis (MacMaster 2003:59). This phenomenon originates from the historical, socio-political, and economic conditions on the so called "Cape Flats". MacMaster (2003:69) pleads with the church to invest in "life-changing" programmes. This article is a descriptive effort at developing a religious pedagogical methodology for people working with gangsters.

1.1. Setting the hypothesis

This article assumes that church ministry mainly stems from a first-world philosophy. Rationality is being elevated to a higher position than meaningful human feelings and experiences. The result is that this scenario creates difficulties for the church in working with gangsters in a meaningful way. The hypothesis set for this article is that gangsters can indeed be reached by the church by way of intersubjective communicative faith acts.

1.2. Problem statement

The question that comes up for discussion in this paper is the following: Are meaningful communication and transformative thought, attitudes, values, virtues (Koopman & Vosloo 2002), and faith acts possible amongst gangsters? Hypothetically spoken, it seems that gangsters lack a healthy or practical rationality (cf. Van der Ven

1998:34). In my view, we could here be looking at a “naïveté attitude” (cf Freire 1974:43) that is asking for a new understanding and a new approach.

2. Describing the subculture of gangsters

For purposes of this article, the term gangster or *gangsterism* as used by MacMaster (2003:60) suffices. It provides a better expression of the seriousness of this phenomenon. On the “Cape Flats” itself, people mainly use the terms “gang” or “gangsters”.

Gangs have their own particular view of life and form a particular subculture. Within this subculture, gangsters create their own laws, structures of rank, forms of expression, tattoos, and even flags to communicate their ethos and identity. Particular rituals are performed when recruiting and training new members. For instance, some gangsters may attack members of other gangs or innocent people to be considered for a higher position. These actions are mostly unlawful and immoral and are associated with the use of marijuana, homosexuality, bribery, and a particular aversion to religion (Kritzinger 1986:167).

The phenomenon of gangsters provides a challenge to the church, i.e. to address it in a constructive way (Kritzinger 1986:167). One can find the causes of *gangsterism* in the socio-political and economic circumstances of the Cape Peninsula (MacMaster 2003; Pedro 2001:44). These political and economic powers can exercise a “dominating and paralysing effect” on the life-world of people. Domination relates to “colonisation”, which threatens the freedom and solidarity of people. This domination can well be said to be kept under control by way of communicative acts (Van der Velde 2000:28). Thus, we talk about “*gangsterism-colonising*”, which dominate and disturb the life-world of ordinary people (MacMaster 2003:59, 60). Gangsters sponge on society and develop an own political, economic and social system which deprive people of their freedom, safety, and dignity (MacMaster 2003:67-69; cf. Freire 1972:29). Such a gangster system sponge on and thrives on other people’s defencelessness by way of a show of power and financial manipulation. In this way, the truth, values, and norms are replaced and

distorted into an “own justice” – in such a way that the victims are forced into silence. A suppressive situation, which in actual fact is “anti-dialogisch” in nature, can then arise. The maintenance of the *status quo* and the subjection of defenceless people then becomes the aim (Freire 1972:118, 170). The next story serves as an illustration of the dialogic inability of the church community:

The gruesome rape and murder of Valencia Farmer shook our community and country into shock and disillusionment (Die Ligdraer 1999). Initially, Valencia grew up in the rural areas with her grandmother, and later on, she came to live in the city with her mother. She had to adapt to her immediate environment and made new friends; amongst others, she befriended a gangster. The rest of the story is history. For me, the most important question was: Did we as adults, at the church, school or at her home, informed her about the potential dangers in her environment? In other words, was there a discussion to convey our knowledge and experience of the dangers in the environment to her? (Own translation)

In light of the story above, this article tries to offer a practical theological proposal for the phenomenon of “anti-dialogic” situations. Ploeger (1995:121) has pointed out the prevalence of “anti-dialogic” communication at home. Children show a tendency towards aversion towards their parents. This can be ascribed to the fact that there is no space for genuine dialogue, especially when adults do not accept that children are “different”. The structure of children’s thought, their way of dialogue, and their experience within the current youth culture differ from that of their parents. Similar phenomena often occur in the practice of church ministry. This article wants to help parents and the church in this regard to build on dialogue as a pedagogical and missionary opportunity.

3. *Dialogue versus anti-dialogue communication*

In this article, dialogue has been chosen as methodology because it is one of the most important instruments the church can use to work with gangsters. Dialogue is essential to building the Christian community and forming natural human communities (Groome 1980:188). Thus, dialogue builds up people and forms new character and identity. Dialogue is also dynamic, takes place in the form of a spiral, takes place

simultaneously, takes place within relationships, and is directed towards **change** in terms of the ideal situation of the Kingdom. Speaker, listener, and the topic are simultaneously engaged in dialogue in a **transactional** way. Dialogue always takes place within a particular **context** and against the **background** of particular factors (education, culture, religion, age, career, etc.) concerning each participant (Pieterse 1991:58). Groome (1980:190-191) conceptualises dialogue as more than mere discussion. For instance, dialogue does not merely relate to personal opinions on a matter (Freire 1973:73-76). Freire (1973:73-76) states that dialogue cannot be reduced to the “deposit” and “consume” of ideas. He proposes the following requirements for dialogue: a **genuine love** for the world and humanity; **modesty** because a description of the world cannot be done with arrogance; a **genuine faith** in the ability of people to be creative and re-creative (not a naive faith that ignores failure or accepts it as the final word). This love, modesty, and faith have to lead to a relationship of mutual trust between people. This trust is a direct result of dialogue and not a prerequisite to it; it is **hope** that accounts for the imperfection without accepting silence or escapism from reality. Freire states that dialogue cannot take place within a “hope-less” climate. Taking account of the above dialogic values is a faith value which mediates God’s coming to humanity in a communicative way. Viewed theologically, dialogue thus has to take place against the background of the coming Kingdom of God (Pieterse 1991:53, 55).

Pieterse (1991:57-59) rightly chooses in favour of a dialogic communication theory to serve as the base theory for practical theology; on this theory, the communicative acts of the congregation can be grounded (Pieterse 1991:53). Louw (1983:86) indicates that all effective communication presupposes a **fundamental connectedness**, which is aimed at sharing something mutual with one another. Furthermore, communication between people presupposes a relationship within which one person is completely directed to the other as a unique person. Being personally directed to one another establishes a process which is aimed at the reciprocal exchange of information as two-way traffic. Communication pertains to a reciprocal “between” character in the communication process (Louw 1983:86). Furet (1968:258) also speaks about a between-humans relationship. In the case of faith praxis, the

gospel will take up the reciprocal “between” character between God and humanity, i.e. the communicative acts in service of the gospel (Furet 1968:259-260). On his part, Van der Ven (1998:34-35) distinguishes between intra-communal communication within groups, networks, and communities and inter-communal communication, which pertains to relationships between groups, networks, and communities. In essence, meaningful inter-communal and intra-communal communication aim at conquering a suppressed community and at freeing people (Freire 1972:73). The result of this communication lies in the establishment of reciprocal connectedness and relationships between people.

4. Language as praxeological communicative act

For the aims of this article, Habermas’ methodology of language is important. During the twentieth century, the philosophy of language has played a key role in conceptual analyses, and in the 21st century, it can play an even bigger role. It is not possible anymore to speak about universal, exalted, objective reason. Even less can language be seen as a neutral instrument of reason (Habermas 2001:vii). Reason commands emancipatory potential and always functions within a particular context of interaction. The roots of rationality lie in the structure of everyday communication. Habermas thus understands that the critical power of reason is immanent to ordinary language. Habermas wishes to reject both the emphasis on subjectivism, which focuses on a monologue like self-directedness, and objectivism, which totally ignores the other person’s perspectives (Habermas 2001:vii). He connects language and meaning to his social theory and the theory of actions (Habermas 2001:viii, ix). Habermas further offers an integrated philosophical and empirical theoretical base and methodology for addressing the problems of social acts primarily with communicative reason. His theory of communicative acts is directed towards mutual understanding, which is the highest goal of language. Note the following: Language, reason, and acts function as an inherent whole. Habermas focuses on communicative acts as expressions that imply more than sense making. Communicative acts are meant to entail a **pragmatic theory of meaning** rather than a semantic theory which is totally alienated from the context within which it functions. Secondly, it provides formal recognition to the informal uses of language and thus takes it leave of the typical cognitive approaches to semantics

(Habermas 2001:ix-x). Thirdly, speech act theory draws an analytical distinction between what speakers say about the world and *the inter-subjective relationships that they establish by doing so*. The pragmatic theory of meaning and taking account of informal uses of language, as well as the establishment of inter-subjective relationships in the moment of dialogue, offer informative insights into effective communication with gangsters. The points of departure, frames of reference, and language of the latter are thus acknowledged, which forms a basis for reciprocal communication.

5. Communicative acts focus on intersubjectivity and mutual understanding/experience

The theory of communicative acts operates with a particular speech act with which the subject lays claim to the other subject. By means of this speech act, the one person establishes communication with the other. On this point, one can talk about intersubjectivity, and the first speaker indicates which validity claim (truth, norms, or credibility) s/he connects to the utterance (Habermas 2001:xv). Groome (1980:124, 130) however indicates that Habermas' socialisation process, which functions within his linguistic intersubjectivity, is in danger of maintaining the *status quo* or even strengthening it. On this point, one needs to take note of Groome's (1980) approach of shared praxis which diffuses exactly this tension. The given possibility of **intersubjectivity and, thus, reciprocity** is in fact **the heart of the theory of communicative acts** (Lanser-Van der Velde 2000:28-29). Within the scope of a transformative shared praxeology, dialogue functions between a particular group of people. In this, dialogue is creative, and it can result in new situations (Groome 1980:184).

Communicative acts are based on the presupposition that mutual understanding is possible (Lanser-Van der Velde 2000:29). A number of pedagogues agree with this: Dingemans (1986:13-14) refers to a "reciprocal process of learning", and Van der Ven (1998:30) refers to a simultaneous "reciprocal" interaction between people, their immediate environment, and the wider society. Freire (1972:110) talks about "actors in inter-communication" which, as subjects, form part of the revolutionary action. Ploeger

(1995:301) opines that “learning to understand one another” forms the basis of ethics and religion. Elsewhere, this learning reality is typified as: “learning to live and believe together, learning to believe together and mutual and dialogic learning” (Schaap 1984). Learning to believe is always social learning in terms of which communication between people is always the vehicle of learning (Lanser-Van der Velde 2002:134). Firet (1968:203ff.) refers to the “neighbourly claim”. While communicating, people change one another together and together they actualise their tradition (Burger 2000:237). Dialogue also offers empirical and critical insight into reality (Freire 1972:116). By means of communication, humanity or its world is being **renewed or changed**. In this way, mutual solidarity is restored and people’s freedom is protected over against disruptive systems. Dialogue also forms the base of revolutionary acts, by means of which actors direct their action on reality in an inter-subjective way (Freire 1972:170).

In light of the previous, it is clear that the culture of gangsters can be transformed by means of dialogic, “revolutionary” communicative acts (Freire 1972:40).

6. Transactional and intersubjective communication focuses on new meaning and experience

Lanser-Van der Velde (2000:30) points out that Habermas has learned the concept of “intersubjectivity” from Dewey (1959-1952). Dewey has developed the concept of “reciprocal learning” in detail throughout his theory of knowledge. Dewey first asks how we know before he asks how we learn (<http://siu.edu/-deweyctr>). One of the hypotheses of this article is that gangsters lack in sources of knowledge and experience (concerning a healthy image of the world and their person) and that they are seldom exposed to a liberating pedagogy. In this sense, Dewey’s epistemology is priceless because his pedagogy take as its point of departure real experience and not rationality. Dewey does not draw any real distinction between growth, change, development, learning, or shaping. Habit orientation is descriptive of all change, development, and learning (Dewey 1951:26-27). Basically, experience is real experience and rational knowledge does not serve as primary point of departure. Thus, Dewey does not distinguish between knowledge of experience and rational knowledge (Dewey 1938:25;

1951:3-5). Dewey describes the relationship between “do and undergo” as experience (Lanser-Van der Velde 2000:36-37). Humanity and the world, and humans mutually, are not independent of one another, but as presupposition for life, they are intersubjectively reciprocally dependent. Dewey’s epistemology can be described as follows:

- Someone finds her/himself in a particular situation (Suppose each situation consists of the combination of context, time, and person(s) and that it represents a new situation).
- By way of the new situation, confusion sets in.
- In the search for the meaning of the situation, the person-in-context or the person-in-time devise a variety of probable ways to act.
- By means of the combination of previous, laid down, sure knowledge (habits), one particular probable way to act is chosen.
- By way of acting, this probable way to act is tested experimentally.
- In the acting aspect of the transaction, the probable way to act is being verified or falsified.
- With the act, new (related to context and time) meaning is being created.
- The transaction has a triple outcome: new meaning is being created; the person is being changed by obtaining preliminary-sure knowledge; and the context/time and/or other persons are also changed.
- This process indicates the simplest way in which a continuous process of change is established in human life.
- When the preliminary process of reflection on the experimental act is sufficiently completed, a mutual experience has been reached – in this way, new meaningful knowledge of the situation and persons has been gained (Lanser-Van der Velde 2000:50-51; 2002:130-131).

The above description is an abstraction of what happens in reality and is designated with the notion “transactional experience”. Transactional experience is a synoptic rendition of Dewey’s thought and a scientific equivalent of the notion of “reciprocal learning” (Lanser-Van der Velde 2002:130-131).

Intersubjectivity is the core of these communicative acts. The different subjects are related to one another by means of **intersubjectivity**. One finds a continuous interaction between human and situation, and between humans themselves, which can cause continuous and many-faceted change and meaning (Dewey 1951:41pp; Habermas 2001:x). Consequently, **continuity** and **contextuality** point to continuous and relational communicative agogic acts and experiences (Dewey 1938:33pp). People and their contexts continually influence one another. Identity is determined both by other people and one's context (Lanser-Van der Velde 2000:48).

Life is subject to continual change which is determined reciprocally through transactional experiences (Lanser-Van der Velde 2000:49). New situations reorient old habits and the renewing habits leads to alternative, agogic probable ways to act (Dewey 1951:26-29). The orientation of habits, a change in the context, and meaning formation is known as transaction (cf. Van der Ven 1998:28, 30).

By way of communication, new meanings are created in transactional and intersubjective ways (Dewey 1938:46). Therefore, communication is **shaping** in nature and leads to **new experience** (Dewey 1916:6, 11). In a confusing situation, someone can consider various possibilities of meaning by means of language. The latter may lead to destructive acts (anger, violence, corruption) or positive results (Dewey 1951:29). Where there is no freedom and the possibility of choice in suppressive situations, learning, growth, change, and creativity cannot flourish. The realisation of a new experience/idea in the transaction offers change and new knowledge/experience (Lanser/Van der Velde 2000:46). Dewey's epistemology is meaningful for the possibilities entailed in communication. Therefore, communication is a transformative act, which reshapes old habits, views, experiences, and situations in a meaningful way into new possibilities.

7. Communicative acts focus on hermeneutics

In line with Habermas, who dissolves the tension between subject and object, this article argues in favour of a non-discriminatory approach that views and approaches

people as “neighbours” (Firet 1968). In this regard, Louw (2003:40, 42) points to a paradigm shift in philosophy – from a rational emphasis on reason and logic to hermeneutics. Hermeneutics operates on the presupposition that understanding is a basic characteristic and structure of human existence. The **process of understanding focuses on participation in reality and a particular tradition** which is directed towards **truth and meaning**. The latter can only be attained by way of communication and dialogue (Louw 2003:43). Theology operates with a hermeneutic approach that focuses on knowledge of faith and acts of faith (Heitink 1993:114). For practical theology, the value of hermeneutics is contained in texts of faith (the Bible and church traditions) that refer to the reality of God and that can lead to self-understanding for the believer (Louw 2003:44; Heitink 1993:115). Regarding this point, future research would make a positive contribution if it could indicate how faith texts can be implemented practically in, amongst others, a gangster context.

On his part, Ploeger (1995:120) indicates that hermeneutics is a particular **form of interpretation** by translating the **experiences of people** and the **frame of reference of parents’** faith to their children. The hermeneutical “triumvirate”, reason, will, feeling and heart, has to form a unity and has to be tested by acts and carried by people. Facts, norms, and feelings have to come under discussion in order to ensure effective communication. Problems of understanding are heightened because the frames of understanding of children and adults differ. Nonetheless, identity formation can take place by means of effective communicative acts (Ploeger 1995:304-306, 311). Hermeneutics also has to be able to focus on the question pertaining to the way in which contemporary human beings live and experience their world (Ploeger 1995:245-246). Hermeneutics thus is the doctrine concerning interpretation as it relates to knowledge (the Bible, tradition), social relationships (church), and personal experiences/biography that focuses on the life world of people.

Ploeger and Louw point to parents as an important point of departure for meaningful and identity forming communication with children. I am convinced that the

church should have another incisive look at the reciprocal potential between parents and their children.

8. *An eco-hermeneutical model*

At this point, it is necessary to introduce communicative acts within a broad perspective with aspects such as subjectivity, contextuality, hermeneutics, and agogics. An eco-hermeneutical model focuses on the total ecosystem (socio-political). Dialogue between people entails their total ecosystem (Müller 1991:189). Pedagogy can only be effective if an eco-hermeneutic approach is followed. People are continuously involved in hermeneutic acts (Müller 1991:186). The act of understanding an object, event, or even the total reality thereof takes place within a particular time and a particular context. This is why the terms “hermeneutics” (understanding) and “ecology” (the broadest possible system or network of systems) are used together to refer to eco-hermeneutics. People’s stories can only be understood within an ecological framework. God’s story can also only be understood within the total ecological framework and a particular focus. The eco-hermeneutic approach offers points of connection between God’s story and human stories (Müller 1991:187). The eco-hermeneutical model thus implies a new epistemology that deals with a change in experience, attitude, and presuppositions. An eco-systemic epistemology implies that the pedagogue does not act as a “power broker” in a linear, hierarchical manner but, through interaction with the system, becomes part of it. Interaction and participation with the system determines whether change can take place.

This approach offers a useful proposal for people or groups of people to have agogic interaction with one another as part of an ecosystem. The eco-hermeneutical model is made up of four phases: The discussion leader has to be aware of his/her own social/cultural background/forming and bias towards the “text” (people). The leader has to be willing to listen to others with an open mind. A true dialogue has to take place between the discussion leader and the text (people/text). It requires a hermeneutics of suspicion in order to counter, amongst others, ideological, racist, or feminist distortions in order to make possible good communication (Müller 1991:189). The content and

structure of the text (life-world, verbal communication, symbols) within which it functions are equally important. This structure can be understood as the total ecosystem within which a person or community exists. People should thus be actively involved in social, economic, political, and environmental matters (Müller 1991:190). The relationship between hermeneutics and Firet's (1968:24) agogic moment, as well as the potential for understanding, influencing, and change, hold insightful implications for a mutual eco-hermeneutical communicative approach.

The "attitude", empathy, genuineness, and critical focus of this approach are important for any edifying work amongst gangsters.

9. An eco-hermeneutical methodology for agogic acts amongst gangsters

From a pastoral perspective, MacMaster (2003) pleads for an eco-hermeneutical approach that takes account of the social context of *gangsterism* and that avoids an individualistic anthropology and world view. The eco-hermeneutical methodology (Müller 1991; cf. MacMaster 2003:71, 75) offers informative insights with which to address the pedagogical problem of gangsters:

Interpreting God's grace to people (hermeneutically) within the total reality of their existence (ecosystemical). The gospel is understood as "texts" for a particular life-world (ecosystem) and for particular people; this is achieved by listening to them and by attending to their stories (Müller 1991:186; cf. MacMaster 2003:71).

In this regard, Dewey's (1934) approach of looking at faith from the perspective of people's real experiences is illuminating. Contextuality and the reality of all experience are important for the way in which he understands faith. Faith is present in the world around us (<http://siu.edu/-deweyctr>). The meaningful relationship between human and context offers re-creating potential for people (Firet 1968:203). According to Firet, contextual influencing is more important than the end result. Dewey (1934:26) views faith as a larger qualitative possibility within the latter scopus. Dewey (1934) and MacMaster (2003) have it against forms of individualistic conversion and grace through which the world is left to its own devices. Social involvement and responsibility is

important in shaping virtues (Dewey 1934:87). The church ought to put more emphasis on immanent, social, and human matters as far as Dewey (1934:80-83) is concerned. Dewey departs from the presupposition that people understand themselves, one another, and the world by means of his epistemology. The virtue of responsibility will thus be seen in various acts (Dewey 1934:87).

It is clear from the above that a holistic hermeneutical approach is a prerequisite which ought to include particular key elements. In this way, the fact that the Word is directed towards understanding and change plays a key role. The result is that Furet (1981:125) defines hermeneutics as a process of understanding, which brings to light new meanings, enlightens existing meanings, and leads people towards change and a new life. Furet defines the notion “agogy” as leading to change, the power to become different and new, possibly leading to the clarification of perspectives and new perspectives on life. Practices carry more than mere moral weight; they also carry epistemological weight (Dykstra 1996:171-172). In this, one has to account for the development of a critical consciousness that transforms suppressive situations and has in mind the shaping of people as a whole (Freire 1972:33).

The mutual communicative, hermeneutic interpretation of God’s grace to all people within their real existence ought to take place in a simple, natural, and practical way. Thus, even gangsters ought to appropriate Christ’s work of grace for their own lives in a trustful way.

10. *A Transformative mutual dialogic methodology*

The eco-hermeneutic-agogic methodology can be applied coherently with a contextually reworking of Lanser-Van der Velde’s (2000:171-256) methodology of reciprocal learning of faith. The aim is to propose a practical proposal with which transactional communicative acts (Lanser-Van der Velde 2000:28) can free gangsters from disturbing life situations (Lanser-Van der Velde 2002:129). A Southern African methodology for transformation, that transforms the reciprocal relationships between individual participants, learning contents and the prevalent gangster culture, is needed

(cf. Lanser-Van der Velde 2002:288-289). With this aim in mind, a transformative, reciprocal, dialogic methodology is proposed.

A gangster eco-system is a given reality, given the prevalence and causes of *gangsterism* on the Cape Flats (MacMaster 2003:61-66). The Deweyan hermeneutical process of learning can be made relevant, with particular adaptations, for a scenario such as that of Valencia Farmer. On a daily basis, young people make deliberate ir/rational choices to join gangs, despite their age and the great number of risks related to membership of a gang (MacMaster 2003:63, 66). Dewey's epistemology and Lanser-Van der Velde's (2000) reciprocal dialogic methodology can assist young people in making responsible choices and even in having changing experiences (Van der Ven 1998:31, 35). The aim, that young people's (gangsters) ability towards transformative communication is able to changes their relational commitments towards an ideal, is not exaggerated (Jonker 2002:143). Apart from this, the interpretation of God's grace ought to be spoken and translated with a "revolutionary" and empathetic Evangelic seriousness on a daily basis.

The fact of the matter is that we are here talking about people who have been unsettled and who have particular needs (MacMaster 2003:66). For this reason, it is necessary to create structured as well as informal opportunities for recursive reflection and experience (Lanser-Van der Velde 2000; Van der Ven 1998; Groome 1982). On an intersubjective level, the opportunities mentioned above can help gangsters to express themselves, hearing the Gospel in a "safe environment" in order for agogic, life-changing acts to flourish. A shift in emphasis from a naive attitude to a positive critical attitude, with the Gospel and personal life stories as content, can offer renewing and changing possibilities (Freire 1974:43). The creation of respect and trust (MacMaster 2003:67) for meaningful and recursive-agogic communication is essential.

Next, Lanser-Van der Velde's (2000:288; 312-313) dialogical methodology is proposed for dialogic communicative work with gangsters. Her study showed that people learn from one another interactively and continually. An example of the

abovementioned discussion programme (Lanser-Van der Velde 2000:178-202; 208) adapted for our purposes can be the following:

1. **Theme phase** (in order to determine a mutual topic for discussion)

Interviews with parents

Informative meeting with gangsters

Interviews with gangsters

First and second evening with gangsters

Theme: The violent murder of Valencia

Theme: What does the Bible say about murder?

What touched you? What questions do you have?

First and second evening with parents

Theme: Getting to know one another (the murder of Valencia); orientation

Theme: What does the Bible say about murder?

What touched you? What questions do you have?

Third night with gangsters and parents

Theme: Matters that have been discussed in both groups

2. **Development phase**

Fourth evening with gangsters

Theme: Which aspects are important for future discussion?

Fourth evening with parents

Theme: Which aspects are important for future discussion?

3. **Design phase** (joint discoveries and proposals for further discussions)

Fifth and sixth evening with gangsters and parents

The effect of the themes on both groups

Examples:

1. "Whoever injures her/his neighbour..."
2. "My guilt, our guilt" (Smit 1998 as example).

The effect of a discussion planned in this vein will depend on the commitment, trust, respect, and willingness of both the parents and gangsters or young people to listen to one another. According to Dewey's epistemological methodology and Lanser-Van der Velde's study that has confirmed this in practice, changes in points of view, attitudes, and dispositions takes place at this very point.

11. Conclusion

In essence, dialogue is a form of communicative cooperation between people, and it is directed towards mutual understanding and experience. The result of recursive discussion can check the dominance of systems. The church will not be able to address the phenomenon of gangsterism with her normal service programmes. A totally different way of thinking and working is asked for. Dewey's epistemology does not only offer the moral cadre as general aim, but it is also the guiding norm for the smallest of act, experience. Doing and experiencing what is good, right, and wise is possible in numerous everyday acts. In small, practical, and everyday acts of discussion, virtuous citizens are oriented and reoriented (Lanser-Van der Velde 2000:82). The latter has proved empirically that a change in thought, conduct, and lives really is possible amongst young people and their parents. One should not underestimate the agogic implications of the Gospel in this regard. Connectedness and meaningful relationships, with which parents and children cannot live healthy lives in their particular life-worlds, are forged in this way. On this point, the church can win the battle against gangsterism!

A reporter of the radio station Cape Talk reported at 17:33 on 4 March 2004 that:

... offenders of horrendous crimes during the 1990's asked and received forgiveness to and from the people of the Richmond (Kwazulu-Natal) community. Now they can start with a process of forgiveness amongst themselves (own transcription).

This is a practical example of change in thought, conduct, and attitude that could lead to remorse, the acknowledgement of guilt, forgiveness, and reconciliation by

people of violence. An opportunity has been created for a mutually frank discussion, and do note the result! The application of the transformative, recursive communicative methodology can help churches to cross borders, to create recursive agogic opportunities.

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