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Towards struggle as lived experience: Contemplation on homiletic research for a (post-)pandemic world

ABSTRACT

This article critically reflects on the trend of current empirical homiletic research. The propensity to privilege grounded theory without thorough theological critique becomes prominent in the interpretation of digital sermons during the national COVID-19 lockdown. The main argument of this article is concerned with the relationship between practice and academia, the prominence of thematic preaching, and the lack of alternative centres of thought. Finally, as an alternative future direction for homiletic research, the article proposes the post-colonial idea of a lived experience of struggle, along with the appreciation for critical engagement with the practice of preaching from the position of the homiletic academia.

1. INTRODUCTION

Zakaria (2020:3) proposes that the COVID-19 pandemic “will not reshape history so much as accelerate it”. If this indeed the case, the pandemic has the potential to set into motion the future direction of whole schools of thought, including homiletic research. Genealogical tracing of South African homiletic thought has been part and parcel of my academic repertoire (Laubscher & Wessels 2016), but I have yet to closely scrutinise the genealogy of homiletic research. Stated differently, at a moment as acute as a pandemic, which potentially accelerates the direction of academic endeavours, it is imperative to delve into the current methodological trends and their



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implications. In this discussion, I examine the prominent trends within the context of the pandemic and work backwards to determine the development and choice of the prominent perspective for homiletic research. Finally, given the importance of decolonising the curricula (Heleta 2016) and the proposal that the future of Africa lies within decoloniality (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015), I propose an alternative subjectivity as lived experience for homiletic research from the work of Ngugi wa Thiong'o.¹

2. HOMILETIC RESEARCH: ON PANDEMIC HOMILETICS AND ITS GENEALOGY

Two significant articles on homiletics were recently published during the lockdown in South Africa, namely "Preaching during the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa: A grounded theoretical exploration" (Steyn *et al.* 2020) and *Pandemic homiletics? A South African exploration of preaching during the time of the Covid-19 crisis* (Nell 2021).

Both articles make strong use of grounded theory as the methodological perspective. What is important to my contemplation in both articles is how grounded theory brings about a theory of preaching. As Steyn *et al.* (2020:3-4) explain, after inductively coding "content thematically" through two phases, open and selective, a third phase is the development of a theory of preaching on the grounds of the previous phases, especially with regard to the themes that emerge most prominently. Thus, one finds "an emerging grounded theory that emerges from the practice of preaching on a particular matter at a particular time" (Steyn *et al.* 2020:4). Similarly, Nell (2021:5), quoting Hennie Pieterse, determines the final step of his endeavour to be the development of a theory of preaching.

Notwithstanding the fact that Pieterse is an author of one of the above-mentioned articles, I find that his previous work on grounded theory emerges at this time as the prominent method of analysing sermons. Steyn *et al.* further represent a large portion of South African homiletic theologians who will have an endearing influence on future dialogues on homiletics. Stated differently, these two articles, in an understanding of pandemic as the acceleration of history, represent what is most prominent in homiletic research and will direct the future of such research. However, I opine that there is an inherent flaw in constructing homiletic theory in this manner, which undermines the theological integrity of homiletics. I now delve deeper into this by examining the history of grounded theory in homiletic research.

1 My contemplation on homiletic research by no means endeavours to be absolute or normative, but rather alternative in the best sense of the word. I am deeply interested in whether post-colonial thought could indeed help expand homiletic research. This article is thus my attempt at such participation.

Pieterse has espoused grounded theory as the methodology for analysing sermons since 2010.² Using the work of Charmaz (2006), Pieterse (2010:114) relates the following as the foundation of grounded theory:

Grounded theory research of sermons has the goal to develop theories for practice from a bottom-up approach, from the concepts emerging from the practice of preachers themselves – an abductive approach.

In my reading of Charmaz, the crux of grounded theory lies therein that “the analytic categories are directly ‘grounded’ in the data”, with the discovery of “fresh categories over preconceived ideas and extant theories” (Charmaz 2006:187). This is a descriptive ground-up approach to research that attempts to discover new categories of thought. In homiletics, this means new categories of thought within the practice of preaching. However, in his thought and usage of grounded theory, Pieterse (2011:96) adds a final phase to the theory: “the construction of a theory of preaching on the theme of the analysis”. Granted, grounded theory is not a prescriptive set of rules but rather “flexible guidelines” (Charmaz 2006:9), from which the researcher(s) will inevitably make choices regarding the construction of theory. Pieterse is correct in proposing that his aim, in using grounded theory, is the construction of a theory of preaching. However, there is a shift of importance with regard to theological gravity, away from normative theory towards descriptive as normative theory. In an earlier article, he espoused grounded theory as a critical approach over and against contemporary homiletic theory, explicitly re-articulating the relationship between practice and theory, underscoring the importance of practice for theory (Pieterse 2010:120).

Recently, Pieterse (2020) defended the usage of grounded theory for homiletic research. He espoused that grounded theory is in accordance with a post-modern paradigm of research and that the inductive nature enhances the possibility that “the real contents of the sermons have a better chance to emerge from the data” (Pieterse 2020:5). I agree with Pieterse on this point, if the data is derived from a single sermon. However, when the data is derived from many sermons, it implies a system of thought over a large number of cases and excludes the possibility that individual preachers could have divergent *real contents* or meaning in their sermons. The idea of a system of thought among thinkers of the same era is indeed, within the post-modern framework, from the work of Foucault (Gutting 2005:34). However, such a position is not without its critique. Take, for instance, homiletic research on contextual theology at the end of the apartheid era. Smith (1987:106-107)

2 It must be noted that Cilliers (1996, 2006, 2012, 2013) used the Heidelberg method of sermon analysis and often chooses to analyse only one sermon for an article (although he did analyse more substantial sections of sermons to be published in larger writings – such as a book).

concedes that preaching steeped in black theology of liberation (BTL) is contextual, but proposes that it is not liberational, but rather legalistic. Boesak (1984:142-152) opposes such a view and believes that BTL is the only contextually accurate Christian expression. Pieterse (1984:7-9) proposes that contextual preaching ought to be a “hermeneutic interaction between text and the contemporary situation [where] the text is allowed to address us”, making no mention of BTL. Thus, a close reading of these views on preaching in a similar time frame showcases three divergent ideas on the same topic.

Furthermore, one must reckon with the issue as to whether the *real contents* of texts are equal to the most prominent themes or words used in a specific text. Great works of writing do not repeat (and often do not even mention) the deeper meaning of the work. For instance, in contemplating the meaning of Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, Van Rossum (2020:16) concludes as follows:

Dit is de eerste en belangrijkste les vanuit Dostojevski’s roman: vergeving kán ter sprake gebracht worden in onze tijd, zeker, maar alleen in het besef dat ook de aardappel van óns leven vanbinnen door en door verrot is. Wij zijn er ook één van Karamazov.

Certainly, the interpretations of texts must be negotiated, and one could agree on the viability of interpretations, but claim that the real contents of texts coming to the fore by the proportion theme are used. What I am getting at is that grounded theory does not solve the problem of the researcher’s/ researchers’ epistemological perspective.

Returning to his apologetics for grounded theory, Pieterse (2020:5) concludes:

We must always remember that the results of a Grounded Theory research of the contents of sermon and interview documents are always very specific cases and in specific contexts – therefore, the results are relevant for the time being and should be tested again in new contexts using new data in the future.

If this is indeed the case, I would argue that “specific cases in specific contexts”, which “should be tested again in new context”, must exclude the possibility that a theory of preaching could be constructed for prescriptive use in the future – a prominent claim made earlier by Pieterse (2011:96), Steyn *et al.* (2020:4), and Nell (2021:5). In this line of thinking, grounded theory is indeed a viable direction of homiletic research as a description of what is being preached within a particular context by particular preachers. It is, however, wrong to propose the findings of grounded theory as prescriptive for preaching, because the specificities of cases and context will differ, not to

mention the choices of the researcher(s). Furthermore, if the new emerging research agenda within the framework of post-modern thought is merely the attempt to describe what is going on in the specificities of cases and contexts, one must inevitably relinquish any ethical contemplation of such sermons.

That being said, Steyn *et al.* and Nell, in their articles, aim to seek (seemingly) new categories of thought within preaching and then expand on those thoughts towards a normative theory of preaching. The implication of this grounded theory method for homiletics is at least threefold.

First, it redetermines the relationship between academia and the practice of preaching. This specific iteration of grounded theory implies that academia is responsible only for relaying what is practised in preaching and expanding on the categories found. Academia thus becomes a mouthpiece for the practice of preaching without critical reflection and formation of such practice.

Secondly, grounded theory proposes that preaching practice can be distilled into categorical themes without considering the greater focus and function of the sermon. Two implications are the problem of thematic preaching and ignorance of the greater context in which themes make meaning in the sermon event.

Thirdly, grounded theory ignores ideas that are not part of the greater system of thought of the practice of preaching. Non-prominent perspectives and insights will remain marginalised and become (unintentionally) suppressed, unheard, and silenced.

I want to clarify that I do not believe that these implications are intentional, but rather unintentional, transpiring from the particular usage of the methodology. Therefore, let me consider the first implication in the context of lockdown preaching, the relationship between academia and the practice of preaching.

2.1 Locked in an imaginative past

Steyn *et al.* articulate their objective in researching 24 sermons during the first two Sundays (22 and 29 March 2020) after the national lockdown as a twofold attempt. First, “a substantive analysis” of the sermons in this time frame. Secondly, the endeavour “to formulate homiletic route markers in the form of a (preliminary) theory of practice for preaching in comparable times” from the analysis mentioned earlier. They found the following:

The content of sermons preached in the first two weeks since the imposition of restrictions in South Africa, can thus homiletically be described as follows: amidst the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the hearers are invited by the preachers to see, with the help of habits of faith and discernment, God’s divinity as comfort and hope, and to be serviceable (Steyn *et al.* 2020:10).

Steyn *et al.* (2020:10, 14) further delimited the analysis to three core aspects:

[T]he reality experienced by the hearers and the reality proclaimed by the preachers, and the manner in which habits of faith and discernment form a hinge between the two realities.

Steyn *et al.* thus work with a twofold finding in the analysis, namely central themes developed in the sermons, and the understanding of lived experience as portrayed by the preachers both as the essential being of human existence for the listeners in the context of lockdown and an imagination towards the future. Notwithstanding the first, I find interesting avenues of discussion with regard to the second. After all, the insights brought to the table by this analysis showcase a particular system of thought that needs to be engaged.

Steyn *et al.* (2020:10-12) locate their analysis of the system of thought through the image of “a near-far experience”. The lived experience comes to the fore as a disruption of safety and fear of the unknown context towards an experience of trauma (Steyn *et al.* 2020:10-12). Theologically, the question of God’s presence is brought under suspicion (Steyn *et al.* 2020:10-12). In Nell’s (2021:8-9) article, similar trends of unwanted disruption, fear, anxiety, and the theodicy question come to the fore. However, this conceptualisation of lived experience is only possible within the lockdown context if an understanding of human existence underscored the previous state of existence (pre-lockdown) as neatly woven, orderly, and in place. Mignolo (2007:454) calls this state of existence “the myth of modernity”, which ignores the reality that such a state of orderliness is actually upheld by violence.

My concern lies in the methodology’s inadequate engagement with the understanding of lived experience pre-lockdown. The methodology’s uncritical engagement locks lived experience in the perceived understanding of the preachers. It seems that the pre-lockdown reality becomes a nostalgic paradise that takes no cognisance of its deeply rooted problems; stringent race relations as a residue of apartheid, poverty, corruption, and violence to name but a few. Cilliers (2012) showcases a similar trend of romanticising the past in his empirical research on sermons. Thus, the possibility exists that these sermons are not that novel for the lockdown context, but merely re-articulate and accelerate prior prevalent schools of thought on lived experience which longs for an imaginative past.

2.2 Locked up in themes

This brings me to the second point I have raised: the adequacy of categorical themes for the practice of preaching. As shown earlier, Steyn *et al.*’s findings proposed themes of both disruption and imagination towards the future. The first, including themes of fear and the theodicy question (Steyn *et al.* 2020:8).

The second, comfort, hope, and serviceability as antidote to the disruption (Steyn *et al.* 2020:8). Similarly, Nell (2021:13-17) opines themes of fear and anxiety regarding the context of disruption, and images of God bringing forth trust and hope, together with spiritual practices as future directions.

In their concluding remarks, Steyn *et al.* (2020:19) propose Silent Saturday as mode of existence during the lockdown period, as a liminal space that finds incorporation of both disruption (Lent) and imagination towards the future (Easter):

In this virtual space, preachers are invited, whether in Lent or Easter, to remain in a sermon mode of Silent Saturday, to rest in a homiletic spirituality of liminality that holds on to both cross and resurrection, as long as lockdown, at whatever level, continues.

My concern to this conclusion is twofold. First, the problem of thematic preaching, exacerbated by the methodology. Secondly, the proposal of a single mode of preaching to complement the proposed themes. The first concern lies therein that thematic preaching tends to subordinate the biblical text to a marginal position, especially regarding how newness enters the world through the strangeness of the text. When thematic preaching is privileged, the strangeness of the biblical text is undermined and the themes become all-encompassing.³ The second concern, to propose a single mode for preaching in lockdown, is just as worrying. Even if the mode is proposed as one of “liminality”, it still becomes a static mode of existence. Within the context of lockdown, liminality is not a space of negotiation or open for discussion but the acceptance of latent governmental paternalistic behaviour (Wessels 2020:160-163). Or to put it more clearly, the audible frustration of Van Morrison (2020) would find no place in this liminality:

No more lockdown
No more government overreach
No more fascist police
Disturbing our peace
No more taking our freedom
And our God-given rights
Pretending it's for our safety
When it's really to enslave

3 In this line of thinking, the voice of the Bible is muted, and contextual realities may eradicate God from the pulpit. For a more thorough contemplation on preaching which is entrenched in the situation to the peril of the text, see Cilliers (1996, 1998, 2004, 2006, 2012, 2013).

2.3 Lockdown on the margins

This brings me to the third concern. Grounded theory works with themes that emerge as prominent among the sermons researched. This implies that ideas that are not prominent will not see the light of day, even if their utterances are important. The concern is that marginal, yet important, thought will be (unintentionally) suppressed, unheard, and silenced.

This is especially worrying in the context where grounded theory becomes the methodology of use in current research on preaching in South Africa. Rather, one ought to carefully consider the possibility that such research would be keen to miss those who have fallen through the cracks. For instance, during the lockdown, some churches in South Africa stopped broadcasting sermons, because of financial issues in competition with “established online international outfits” (Stoltz 2022). If one were to research the sermons available, one’s data set would only include the sermons of churches that were able to survive the financial burdens of the lockdown, and not hear the voices of those whose potential to preach came to a destructive end.

I do not think that this problem can necessarily be solved, but this lacuna does allow for at least two important insights. First, the necessity of research methodologies to be self-aware of their intrinsic limits, and to explicitly claim such limits without rejecting the particularities in which it is still valid as research. Secondly, this lacuna opens the possibility for research on those aspects that fall by the wayside, with the explicit aim to fill the gaps that have been missed. Once more, I am not proposing that grounded theory, as espoused above, is not important and a legitimate direction of research; I am merely attempting to pinpoint its limits, in order to facilitate the necessity for alternative centres of research thought to enhance the repertoire of research in South African homiletics.

3. HUMAN EXISTENCE IN THE EMPIRE OF NOTHING

Moving away from my response on grounded theory as the pervasive empirical theory for sermon analysis in the current South African homiletic landscape,⁴ I want to focus on what, in my opinion, is overlooked, but quite obviously underscores the sermons analysed in both Steyn *et al.* and Nell – the underlying understanding of human existence.

4 I mention once again that Cilliers’ (2012, 2013) usage of the Heidelberg method and focusing on only one sermon at a time is an alternative to the current pervasive methodology that brings forth an alternative, although not without its own shortcomings.

As mentioned earlier, Steyn *et al.* (2020:10) contemplate three sections in their analysis: the listeners' experienced reality; the preachers' proclaimed reality, and habits of faith and discernment as the hinge between experienced reality and proclaimed reality. However, the listeners' situation is postulated from the sermons analysed. Thus, one deals not with the listeners' experienced reality, but with the preachers' interpretation of the listeners' experienced reality. Stated differently, one has, in this instance, to do with what preachers think listeners experience during the onset of lockdown. To my mind, the fact that preachers propose in their sermons the necessity for habits of faith and discernment to move towards the proclaimed reality of God *actually* being near and death far (Steyn *et al.* 2020:10, 13) represents an understood lived experience, where the listeners experience lockdown as a loss of the normal that must be amended by therapeutic preaching (Alcántara 2019:23-25).

Is this truly the situation of lockdown? Some people certainly did experience lockdown as a disruption to their well-being and livelihoods. But this is not a universal reality. Meylahn (2020:2) showcases the discrepancies between day-labourers and those who could easily move their work to their home and continue earning their income. Building on this idea, there certainly is a difference between the entrepreneur's experience in the informal sector, whose only income has become null and void, and the government employee (including myself), whose income is guaranteed. Likewise, there is a difference between a house with a pool, Netflix, and stocked liquor shelves and informal housing. There are many lived experiences between these extremes, ranging from joy to sorrow, expectation to depression, and opportunity to imprisonment. Furthermore, in the context of lockdown, the adolescent gamer, the hermit, and the online guru find themselves in a "delicious confinement" (Lévy 2020:39-54), working towards the greater good to limit the spread of COVID-19. Furthermore, a recent study found that the total number of billionaires had actually increased by an unprecedented 30%, and that 86% of billionaires' wealth increased in the time frame since the onset of COVID-19 (Jackson 2021).

The analysed sermons understand human beings as fragile beings who need to be comforted, reminded that everything will be alright, and engrossed in a therapeutic bubble wrap.

The irony of the lockdown measures lies therein that lockdown forces us not out of our comfort zones but deeper into our comfort zones. It is an anti-crisis, which does not expect human beings to exert energy, creativity, and effort to change, improve, or better the world. But instead, as anti-crisis, human beings are implored to evade life, in order to save lives. And what life is that?

Lives, life. The life that we are being urged to save by staying home and resisting the temptation of reopening. That life is a bare one. A life drained and depleted, as in the work of Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben. A life terrified of itself, gone to ground in its Kafkaesque burrow, which has become a penal colony. A life that, in return for an assurance of survival, was ready to give up all the rest – prayer, honoring the dead, freedoms, balconies and windows from which our neighbors, once they had finished applauding the caregivers, could spy on us. A life in which one accepts, with enthusiasm or resignation, the transformation of the welfare state into the surveillance state, with health replacing security, a life in which one consents to this slippery slope: no longer the old social contract (where you cede a bit of your individual will to gain the general will) but a new life contract (where you abdicate a little, or a lot, of your core freedoms, in return for an antiviral guarantee, an “immunity passport”, a “risk-free certificate”, or a new kind of get-out-of-jail-free card, one that lets you transfer to another cell) (Lévy 2020:67-69).

This is the most significant transgression of sermons during the lockdown. The relentless proclamation of reality as a state of comfort and luxury (exuberated by consumerism). This state of being brings forth entitlement for the good life (without exerting any effort) and resentment when the good life is not received on a silver platter. Furthermore, as Yuval Noah (Harari 2015:94) argues, luxury is a trap that

once people get used to a certain luxury, they take it for granted. Then they begin to count on it.

I am, however, interested in finding human existence in its bare reality, stripped of the false securities of the Empire of Nothing:

The Empire of Nothing has no Emperor, no center and no people. One might say that the cultural center of the Empire of Nothing is Los Angeles, and they'd be partially correct. In fact, the Hollywood entertainment industry illustrates the mechanism and values of the Empire reasonably well. The culture produced is produced primarily for profit. Films and television shows are tested with audiences to assure the broadest appeal and the highest profit. The content produced may appeal to some more than others, but it can never be overtly exclusive. Everything must be for everyone, and no one too much. The most successful and celebrated entertainment products have universal appeal. ... There is no cultural hegemony emanating from a particular people with a particular identity, merely a profit-driven system of production that responds to changes in the market, with the aim of reaching the most consumers possible. The only culture being imposed through this mechanism is anti-culture — moral and cultural

universalism that dissolves social boundaries to make the maximum number of consumers feel included (Donovan 2016:17-18).

As far as I can gather, the only lamentation found in the sermons were the loss of this humanity, this status quo, and the certainty the Empire of Nothing has afforded. However, is there an alternative human existence that has always been but has not been privileged by the Empire of Nothing?

4. CONCEPTUALISING HUMAN EXISTENCE AS STRUGGLE FOR HOMILETIC RESEARCH IN A (POST-)PANDEMIC⁵ WORLD

Theologies of liberation claim to be interested in the plight of the poor, the marginalised, and the excluded. Yet, at least within the democratic South African context, black theology of liberation and the proponent of public theology have misallocated their interlocutor, siding instead with the concept of critical solidarity with the democratic government. Vellem (2012:4) explains:

It is needless to give an exposition of the same shifts of interlocution in the well-known notion of “critical solidarity with the state”. At its core, the methodological implication of this notion is that ultimately, the poor are left alone, as the church and the state are in solidarity albeit critical solidarity.

Although there are more significant nuances regarding the necessity within a democratic South Africa to play by the rules of the game to the greater benefit of all (or the vast majority of people) (Naudé 2014; Naudé & Laubscher 2016), my interest lies in understanding human existence. I opine that Vellem is correct in proposing that a middle-class existence is privileged over and above that of the existence of struggle. In a recent conversation with a friend, I related my lived experience of loss and struggle (which had nothing to do with lockdown). His answer to my lived experience was a reference to the Confession of Belhar that God during that time was “in a special way” my God (*Confession of Belhar* 1986:Article 4). My kneejerk reaction was that I did not want God to be my God in a special way, merely in a usual way. Reflecting on this conversation, I now gather that God is always, in a special way, the God of who we truly are as human beings; “the destitute, the poor, and the wronged”

5 The brackets indicate the fluctuation between pandemic world and world after the pandemic, indicating thus that the world has always been a world with a variety of pandemics. Some pandemics such as COVID-19, SARS, Ebola, TB, and HIV/Aids are virological. Others are ideological, on both right and left extremes, and of religious fanaticism. Others such as the crises of gender-based violence are physical. There is thus no world without pandemics (and violence) and no world in which human beings have not structured their existence in such a way as to cope with pandemics.

(*Confession of Belhar* 1986:Article 4) as a struggling people. But to be found as a struggling people, human existence must be proposed as such.

The call for the rediscovery and the resumption of our language is a call for a regenerative reconnection with the millions of revolutionary tongues in Africa and the world over demanding liberation. [This book] is a call for the rediscovery of the real language of humankind: the language of struggle. It is the universal language underlying all speech and words of our history. Struggle. Struggle makes history. Struggle makes us. In struggle is our history, our language and our being (Wa Thiong'o 1986:108).

I want to clarify that my reading of Wa Thiong'o's call for the rediscovery of struggle as human existence is opposed to a hijacking of the terms and content of struggle for any one group under the umbrella of identity politics or an ideological agenda. Thus, struggle is not to be located within the confines of particular locations of culture to exclude other locations of culture. Instead, struggle brings to the fore an adamant rejection of victimhood towards agency as well as a localised consciousness that one's well-being is dependent on that of one's neighbours. That being said, it is a collective struggle through agency towards the impossibility of attainment of well-being, yet without relenting such a struggle.

Interlocking with Rambo's (2019) contemplation on trauma where she states that

[e]xperiences of pain, loss, and suffering are part of human experience, and in time many are able to integrate the suffering into their lives,

Wa Thiong'o's call for the rediscovery of struggle as language and being brings forth other ways of relating to the reality of lockdown. It awakens one to the fact that a world forces one towards

neat and clean. Immaculate and without stain. Aseptic. Sanitized. Disinfected. In Greek, the word is *cosmos*. In French and English, *cosmetic* ... It is the name of a too beautiful world in which we are asked to hide the misery, the evil, the Medusas that we would prefer not to see (Lévy 2020:90, 92).

If human existence is struggle, the world is "the real world. The one in which people strive, grieve, hope, and die" (Lévy 2020:90). Research on preaching should be based on this conceptualisation of human existence in a (post)-pandemic world.

5. CONCLUSION

In a (post-)pandemic world, two important avenues ought to be considered for the homiletic academia in a (post-)pandemic world. First, the construction of a methodology that adequately considers the human experience from a focal image of struggle. Secondly, the academia ought to endeavour to place ~~normative~~ and re/formative⁶ homiletic theory on the table, both in teaching and in consciousness. These avenues represent what I deem essential realities within the academia, which is currently being side-lined and marginalised. After all, the conversation with the practice of preaching cannot merely wander in the proximity of appreciation of that which is preached; it should rather critique that which does not realistically perceive human existence as a struggle for life.

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6 I strikethrough the word “normative” to indicate that the word “normative” is never without reformation and renegotiation as context and lived experience fluctuates. However, that does not mean that the normative task is to be forsaken or swallowed into relativity. The same goes for the slash in re/formative.

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