

TEACHING OLD TESTAMENT ETHICS FOR MASTERS AND DOCTORAL STUDENTS FROM THREE CONTINENTS: CONSTRAINTS, PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES WHEN PITCHED AS “PUBLIC GOOD”

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INTRODUCTION

The term “*public good*” is derived from economic theory where it refers to “*a good that is freely available to be enjoyed by all*”. It seems as if there might be different definitions of “public good” presumed by participants in the “*Colloquium on Hopeful Pedagogies*” - over and above the economic definition, some seem to relate it to the “*common good*” etc.

CONSTRAINTS AND PROBLEMS

Can higher education in any developing economy claim to be a “*public good*” if more than one third of its population is unemployed and hard pressed to access the ivory towers of academic privilege? This national reality is exacerbated when confronted with international students from numerous African countries.

In South Africa we seem to develop an ethos of entitlement that at times do not prioritize academic excellence, but rather utilize “*diversity*” as a rhetoric of persuasion for personal and expedient advancement.

OPPORTUNITIES

If a “*public good*” must be used by everyone without diminishing its value, then no one can be excluded to use it and the use of higher education as “*public good*” must not reduce the availability of it for any other person.

For centuries research and tuition were the two primary responsibilities of a university. The University of Stellenbosch has opted to embrace community interaction as a third responsibility of university, in such a way that it fundamentally impacts on the way the two traditional functions are performed. “*Hope*” is seen as a “common” or “public good” that one is morally obliged to further when engaged with research and tuition that is intimately related to the community within which it is performed.

For Immanuel Kant three questions really mattered and each indicated different types of opportunities:

- What can I know? (Education)
- What can I hope? (Religion / Theology)
- What must I do? (Civil society)

Against this backdrop I presented a **series of postgraduate seminars on Old Testament ethics for masters and doctoral students in Old Testament from Korea to Nigeria and from the USA to Zimbabwe during the fourth quarter of 2010**. In the conclusion a one day conference was held on the theme: “*The Decalogue and Human Dignity in Africa*”. More information about the seminars and the one day conference will be communicated during the discussion as an example of how ethical reflection as a “public good” was embedded in a curriculum - whether it constitutes “*good practice*” the audience will have to decide!