Ubuntu and the quest for land reform in South Africa

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In this article, I ask the question how we can relate *ubuntu* to South African land reform from a practical-theological point of view. I will look at researchers' efforts to understand *ubuntu* and how these efforts do and do not integrate into the conversation around land reform. Referring to land reform, I will focus on two private narratives as opposed to dominant public narratives. An in-depth discussion on legislation and research on perspectives of land ownership therefore falls outside of the ambit of this article. In conclusion, I will argue that the relationship between a landowner and his or her dispossessed coworkers can be the fertile soil which *ubuntu* requires to find sustainable local answers to land reform.

Introduction

I am an African practical theologian and agricultural landowner reflecting on the quest for land reform in South Africa. The current situation where only 20% of agricultural land is in the hands of the black majority is untenable for both the landless dispossessed people and the land owning agriculturalists. Hendricks, Ntsebeza and Helliker (2013:1–366) state that colonial dispossession has led to land ownership being historically determined by race. This may be stating the obvious but the inability to correct the imbalance results in an ongoing crisis. Cavanagh (2014:431) in his positive review of this compilation of essays complains, ironically, that the authors do not define 'colonial dispossession' coherently. I suggest that dominant narratives and generalisations, as true as they may be, do not lead to local solutions. I will therefore endeavour to focus on my private narrative, a localised problem and its solution. Hereafter, one may suggest ways of implementing such a solution in a wider context.

The agricultural land I own has no recorded claims for restitution against it. This does not preclude me from acknowledging my responsibility for this land in a context where the indigenous peoples lost their land to my pioneer forebears. As a practical theologian my point of departure is local – the lived and interpreted experiences of my family and the family that works the land with me, the Makwakwa's. In this article, I therefore explore *ubuntu* and the quest for South African land reform with a postfoundational and social-constructionist, practical-theological curiosity. South Africans are facing a serious dilemma as we try to remedy the legacy of apartheid as embodied in the unequal distribution of land ownership to bring it in line with the Constitution's tenants of nonracism, human dignity and the sanctity of property rights.

I will attend to a discussion of the above and then conclude that in keeping our focus local, our interconnectedness and shared vulnerability can shift the issue from the land to the people. This shift, to my mind, enables creative thinking and innovative planning, setting landowners and landless people together on a road of reconciliation to find localised solutions to local problems.

Methodology

As a postfoundational practical theologian and landowner I am subjectively invested in the quest to right the eschewed landownership of South Africa. Foundationalism refers to an understanding that all knowledge is built on certainty. This certainty forms the foundation on which all other knowledge is built. Foundational rationality sets out from the bottom up, first constructing the absolutes on which further knowledge and beliefs are built. In theology, the debate as to the nature of this certainty raged between liberalism where human experience was regarded as the basis of all knowledge as opposed to conservatism where Scripture is the basis of all knowledge and beliefs. The mere notion of absolute knowledge in postmodernity is impossible. Van Huyssteen (1997) recognises that some forms of nonfoundationalism are so invested in absolute relativism that they represent nothing else but foundationalism in disguise. He proposes an alternative to both foundationalism and nonfoundationalism and coins the term postfoundationalism.

Van Huyssteen (1997:4) describes postfoundational theology as wanting to:

> [M]ake two moves. First, it fully acknowledges contextuality, the epistemically crucial role of interpreted experience, and the way that tradition shapes the epistemic and nonepistemic values that inform our reflection about God and what some of us believe to be God's presence in this world. At the same time, however, a postfoundationalist notion of rationality in theological reflection claims to point creatively beyond the confines of the local community, group, or culture towards a plausible form of interdisciplinary conversation. (p. 3)

Postfoundationalism requires a rationality that does not only foster interdisciplinary research but transcends the borders to share the foci and become transversality, replacing universality and rationality. Müller (2008) argues that although Van Huyssteen does not mention social constructionism, his postfoundationalism falls within the same epistemology. Müller suggests that postfoundational epistemology can be used with social constructionism and hermeneutics. Epistemologically I will therefore approach knowledge from a social-constructionist understanding of reality: there is no grand narrative, yet we create and negotiate knowledge and meaning locally through the language we use in the stories we relate. Freedman and Combs (1996:22) describe this approach effectively. In this regard, the narratives of the already mentioned two families will be a significant feature.

I will follow Müller's (2004:300) 7-step interpretation of postfoundationalism to see how the lived experiences of our two families and our connectedness to each other and the land can result in the land empowering both groups:

- I will describe our specific context.
- I will listen to in-context experiences and describe them.
- I will interpret our experiences, describe and develop them in collaboration with coresearchers.
- I will describe our experiences as they are continually informed by traditions of interpretation.
- I will reflect on the religious and spiritual aspects as it is understood and experienced in our context.
- I will thicken our experience through interdisciplinary investigation.
- I will develop alternative interpretations that point beyond our local community.

My research design is qualitative with the understanding that 'evidence is constructed knowledge', as stated by Freshwater *et al*. (2010:498). This choice falls within the understanding of social constructionism that knowledge is socially constructed. In my context, as in others, we create meaning by the stories we relate through the language we use. In other words, we create meaning socially, taking into account news reports, political rallies and elections. However, predominantly we build our reality through the stories we relate about our lived experiences and a local understanding of events. I choose to do my qualitative research from an ethnographical viewpoint utilising participatory action as method.

Participatory action research is an interpretative approach that creates meaning through interaction with my coresearcher. It does not seek positivist certainties or 'uniform precise rules that organize the world' (Rubin 1995:32). These qualitative research interviews are both unconstructed and semiconstructed, engaging narratives to create meaning and knowledge. DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006:314) comment that the distinction between unconstructed and semiconstructed interviews is largely artificial especially when the researcher follows an ethnographic participatory approach. I focus on the stories of the family that has worked the land together with mine for 164 years, as well as the story of my family. My work is therefore unavoidably auto-ethnographical in nature. Wainberg *et al.* (2007) declare that:

> Ethnography provides a detailed and in-depth account of the local context and social ecology in which an intervention is to be implemented, helping to understand prevalent norms, attitudes, and strategies. (p. 297)

In their research, they used focus groups and targeted interviews. My research involves interviews but also auto-ethnography, in other words, I tell my own story. I chose to speak about myself as the public narrative does little more than entrenching the dominant narrative, marginalising the private narratives. Patricia Leavy (2009:47) explains that this approach to research is gaining ground in multicultural research. One discovers a disjuncture between what is said in an interview, what one observes and what literature claims. Doing research from an ethnographical viewpoint enables me to bring texture and trustworthiness to the converging data.

I hope to explore our shared humanity as expressed in our efforts to create meaningful connectedness to the land. Along this journey, my coresearchers and I may find a preferred reality that transcends the limitations of our past narratives.

Problem statement

We are facing a dilemma in search of a shared moral discourse which Letseka (2011) describes as follows:

> On the one hand South Africa is struggling to comprehend the enduring legacy of apartheid, which left it fractured and with no shared moral discourse … On the other hand South Africa is attempting obilize its peoples to embrace the constitutional values of non-racialism, non-sexism, non-discrimination and respect for freedom, human rights and dignity. (pp. 47–48)

The meaning we create around land is inextricably linked to the history of land ownership and access in South Africa. The *Natives Land Act of 1913* and the *Native Trust and Land Act of 1936* prove that our relationship to the land was indeed controlled by legislation, along racial lines. The preamble of our Constitution states:

> We, the people of South Africa, respect those who have worked to build and develop our country, and believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity. (n.p.)

Are we able to implement *ubuntu* to give heed to our Constitution and give expression to clauses 25(5) and 25(6)

to right the wrongs of 342 years of colonialism and apartheid in terms of access to land for all? I will trace this narrative of our land.

The *Centenary of the Natives Land Act of 1913*, commemorated on 19 June 2013, brought the legacy of this and the *Native Trust and Land Act of 1936* into sharp focus. Our relationship to the land is indeed also controlled by legislation. Walker (2013:282–289) argues that the celebrations showed how government was not addressing the changing relationship to rural land and land ownership, but rather used it as an opportunity for political theatrics. She pleads for a differentiation between the symbolic (which includes political) and material dimensions of land. If poverty reduction is indeed an objective of government, she holds that implications of urbanisation have to enter the land issue. The fact is that urbanisation is a global phenomenon with more people leaving rural areas for urban lifestyles than the other way around.

Bernadette (2011:121) refers to Gibson's research where he surveyed 3 700 South African participants in 2009; 85% of black South Africans believed that the land was taken unfairly from them by white settlers and that they therefore have no right to the land today. In short in racial terms, white people own land they stole from black people. Laing (2011) quotes Mr. Malema's pre-election rhetoric:

> We have to take the land without payment, because the whites took our land without paying and transformed them into game farms. The system of willing seller, willing buyer has failed. We all agree they stole the land. They are criminals, they should be treated like that. (n.p.)

Understandably pressurised by its electorate, the ANC's Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform, Mr. Gugule Nkwinti, proposed a 50/50 sharing of agricultural land early in 2014. This stance had the desired effect at AGRI SA's 110th Year Congress named 'Family farming in a transforming society' held in Tswane from 16 to 17 October 2014. At this instance, AGRI SA tabled a 'Holistic plan for land reform' with the following bullet points:

- Farmers have to be empowered and this will lead to the rural communities determining their own futures.
- District Committees have to identify land and people who can be empowered.
- District committees have to manage and supervise empowerment deals in their areas.
- Participation cannot be compulsory but rather encouraged by way of financial benefits.
- AGRI SA commits itself to the entrepreneurial development and social upliftment of farm labourers.
- AGRI SA commits itself to open dialogue with the government on land reform as the health of the agricultural community depends on disadvantaged people gaining access to land.

These statements caught the Minister unaware. He put his prepared speech aside and said his day was made. His only question was what had taken AGRI SA so long. Social media, reporting from the Congress, told stories of tears of relief being shed all around. Minister Nkwinti expressed his desire to amalgamate his team and the AGRI SA teams.

The time was indeed 'now' if one considers the work of Gibson (2010:135). He looked at an extensive survey that showed that the majority of dispossessed black South Africans insist on land redistribution as a symbolic act, 'grounded in values connected to land as a symbol and in concern for the historical injustices of apartheid and colonialism' (Gibson 2010:135). The people are not interested in direct profit in the first instance. In fact, he finds that land is a symbol of historical injustice.

Gibson (2010:136–140) points to numerous studies which show how South Africa is socio-economically divided amongst racial lines and that black South Africans are more concerned about the past than any of the other racial groups. Land is a symbol of our repressive past. Gibson (2010) concludes that it seems as if black South Africans attach much higher value to land than white people do:

> Without having a piece of land, one is really not a complete person. Land is a symbol of all that has been taken away from Africans. I feel a special attachment to the place where my ancestors are buried. When times are tough, one can always survive if one owns some land. Land is special: having land is more important than having money. If I had my choice, I would live on a piece of land that I could farm. (p. 153)

Our embodiment in rural South Africa seems to run along racial lines. Gravlee's (2009:57) explanation that race becomes biology and embodiment, further points to the land reform as a sensitive racial nerve in the South African landscape. Ntsebeza and Hall (eds. 2007) observe that:

> What land reform is for, who should benefit and how should it be pursued are often treated as technical economic questions, but at its heart the land question is political – it is about identity and citizenship as well as production and livelihoods. (p. 7)

This point was illustrated when tragically land reform fell prey to yet another political game after our National Government needed to distract the nation's attention from the chaos at the State of the Nation Address in February. Minister Nkwinti (2015) decided unilaterally to continue with his 50/50 proposal; his statement read as follows, as recorded in his media briefing of 25 February 2015:

> The 50/50 Policy Framework will be implemented immediately. Government has received a number of proposals from commercial farmers; and, will pilot at least 50 projects during this term. (n.p.)

Different to what his official statement proclaimed, no commercial farmers offered 50% of their land. His conduct did untold damage to the relationship of trust needed to solve this problem on grassroots level, but more importantly, the land issue was used to manipulate political support. This manipulation resulted in a setback in the process of land reform, and divided us further along racial lines.

An understanding of *ubuntu*

Theletsane (2012:266) finds that the Sotho word for *ubuntu* is 'botho', the Afrikaans word is 'broederskap' and the English word 'brotherhood.' This translation is pleasing indeed as the connotations of 'broederskap' and 'brotherhood' hold value across racial lines. Even though these words are gender specific and not gender neutral as in the case of *ubuntu*, they speak to the heart of solve the problem. If our focus can be on our shared humanity and interconnectedness we could possibly discover that sharing the resources becomes easy. Metz's (2014:71) understanding of *ubuntu*, namely 'to prescribe honouring relationships of sharing a way of life and caring for others' quality of life', further emphasises relationship as value.

Mbigi and Maree (1995:110) describe the key values of *ubuntu* as survival, compassion, solidarity, dignity and respect. For the purposes of this article, I would like to give attention to 'compassion' as the value in my mind that is most lacking in the South African land ownership debate. The term 'compassion' intersects with *ubuntu* in the:

> Deconstruction and dismantling of old systems of knowledge and power-discourse while also being active in the construction, establishing and entrenching of new ones – a constant interplay of dynamic forces that manifests itself in unique ways. This is by no means a linear process of clear causality and predictive envisioning as the knowledge-power-discourse dynamic infiltrates all processes and systems. Rather it is a set of antagonistic relationships; a conjunction that joins but does not necessarily unify; simultaneously dynamic, violent, complex, and constructive. (Du Plooy 2014:97)

Although it falls outside the scope of this article to do an in-depth analysis of the term 'compassion', I will start by referring to Battle (1997:123) who calls Tutu's '*ubuntu* theology' an 'African spirituality of passionate concern'. Secondly, I would like to refer to Karen Armstrong's work in this regard and her launching of the Charter of Compassion alongside Bishop Tutu in 2009. After the 9/11 tragedy occurred in New York, Armstrong did extensive work on this subject. She examined the world's religions, including Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism as well as classical rationalism (1999, 2001, 2007, 2010, 2011), and found that compassion was the common thread in all of these. Technology, Entertainment and Design (TED) awarded her a prize of $100 000.00 in 2008 to fulfill her vision of a better world with a 'summons to compassionate action' (Armstrong 2011:22). Her Golden Rule as guiding principle is the adage 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you'.

In 2011, Armstrong published a popular book called *Twelve steps to a compassionate life* (2011), alluding to the 12-step processes followed by groups to retrain and reform addictive behaviours. Compassion like *ubuntu* can be perceived as a mental quality only but ideally translates into action. This action is characterised by the intention to alleviate the suffering of other living beings. Philosophically the question is asked how we know that the other is suffering and secondly what the remedy is. In this regard I would refer to the so-called 'Golden Rule' which intersects with a definition like that of Taylor (2014:338): 'An action is right insofar as it promotes cohesion and reciprocal value amongst people. An action is wrong insofar as it damages relationships and devalues any individual or group'.

Huggins and Clover's (eds. 2005:9) statement in this regard is noteworthy: 'Land rights, like all property rights, are socially-mediated entitlements'. As much as land rights are therefore protected by social sanction, it is a negotiated right that depends on history and relationships. This perspective is helpful as it invites human relationships to the centre of the land issue where people's desires and rootedness find a voice. It is here that we can work compassionately towards change in the spirit of *ubuntu*.

Gade (2012:484–503) organised the answers to the question of understanding *ubuntu* in two clusters. The first cluster referred to *ubuntu* as a moral quality of a person and the second as an African worldview. Desmond Tutu (1984) explained his interpretation of *ubuntu ungamntu ngabanye abantu* like this:

> We say a person is a person through other persons. We don't come fully formed into the world. We learn how to think, how to walk, how to speak, how to behave, indeed how to be human from other human beings. We need other human beings in order to be human. We are made for togetherness, we are made for family, for fellowship, to exist in a tender network of interdependence. (p. 65)

Tutu (1984:155) proclaimed that 'the central work of Jesus was to effect reconciliation between God and us and also between man and man'. This work stands in opposition to separation, discrimination and disempowerment. Tutu (1984:127) holds that true worship is not possible if we live impartially to other human beings' suffering. The interconnectedness of which *ubuntu* speaks makes this impossible. He goes as far as saying that impartial Christianity is false Christianity. Tutu's *ubuntu* in fact emphasises the following aspects of Christian community, according to Battle (1997:112–113): firstly, the church is in but not of the world, always standing as testimony to the unifying love of God. Secondly, the church stands on call ready to stand with the powerless, and thirdly, it reflects on the divine activity of its head Jesus, which is akin to *ubuntu*, always crossing over boundaries to reconcile and dissolve separation.

Tutu's *ubuntu* became of significance to all of us when in 1995 the *Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act* promulgated that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, headed by Tutu, will focus on confession and forgiveness. His understanding that *ubuntu* can only come to actualisation through forgiveness set the tone for the post-apartheid years. Perpetrators in particular, the white church in general and everyone standing apathetic to our apartheid past were forgiven – with the hope of reconciliation and justice bringing us real peace and security. The land issue stands paramount as a symbol of the delay of justice. More than

two decades later, the question remains how we can bridge this impasse?

Yet, a linear or circular understanding of *ubuntu* limits our understanding of the land issue as it separates people from their social, religious and physical worlds. We tend to view people as autonomous agents. If we could reinterpret African cosmology as a spiral, we could broaden the interpretation of *ubuntu*. Müller and Van Deventer (1998) set the family in the centre of this cosmological spiral:

> The creation of people and the institution of marriage and family life go hand-in-hand with the formation of the whole universe and everything that is in it and the forward-moving and ever-expanding spiral of growth and development towards the *eschaton* is inclusively applicable to all dimensions of being part and parcel of the world. (p. 265)

If socially created institutions like marriage and family life form our universe, then it can be argued that our physical environment is also part of that spiral that forms us and which we form in return. A person is therefore not only a person through other people but becomes a human being also through the land and the sky above. We are indeed the land walking. This broadened view of *ubuntu* enables one to view an uprooted landless people with compassion, as brothers and sisters in need of dignity and livelihood.

Ubuntu and the role of land in relationships in South Africa

My postfoundational and social-constructionist practical-theological approach requires of me firstly to describe a context and the related lived experiences and interpretation of such experiences. Here follows a written account of the author and farmer Herman Holtzhausen and his coworker, Joba Makwakwa:

> I am a landowner and farmer in the North West Province. The land I own has been in the possession of my family for seven generations since the first half of the 19th century. Allow me at this stage to express a caution: I'm employing auto-ethnography to reveal texture and contradiction. My narrative may seem esoteric or personal at this stage, betraying a bias or assumption on my side. I relate my story, aiming, as mentioned before, to bring my private narrative, that of a previously advantaged member of society into the light. The advantages that came my way were enshrined in an unjust system called apartheid. Racial discrimination is a crime against humanity, a sin in biblical terms. It is unjust and 100% contrary to the reconciliatory message of Scripture. I have taken responsibility for my personal and collective past in various ways and writing this article and accompanying thesis is just one such a way.
>
> The soil I own and work is almost literally an extension of my body – my ancestors ate the fruit of this land that fed our bodies and integrated with our genes. Wherever I am I feel joined to this land like a child to his mother. I have no understanding of god beyond the earth and what grows from her. Alongside me works Joba Makwakwa, a 31-year-old Tswana father of two. Joba and his family are Tswanas who have lived and worked in this area and later on our farm, as far back as his 82-year-old grandmother can remember. As far as our collective memories reach, Joba and

his family have not owned agricultural land. This statement exemplifies the question: did the Makwakwa's never own agricultural land, was their ownership simply not recorded and erased from memory or was their ownership of land constituted in terms of a tribal, pastoral understanding of land ownership? We don't know. What both Joba and I do know is that there is no reason why he shouldn't own agricultural land now.

> Of the two of us Joba is the practical hands-on farmer. He can mend a fence and build a shed with a set of pliers, wire and scraps of corrugated iron. He has taught me everything I know about sheep farming. Our relationship is one of mutual respect albeit traditional. Joba refers to me as 'baas' no matter how many times I ask him not to.
>
> When speaking to Joba about the land he relates stories of their moving and working various pieces of land for white farmers. Joba's memory reaches back to his father's childhood in Leeudoringstad, our neighbouring town 80 kilometres away. His extended family lived in the township from where they moved to Makwassie, a 100 kilometres from us, where his father and grandfather worked as farm labourers. His father then moved to our area where he worked in the local co-operative as a storeman. In these days, they lived on my uncle's farm and after the co-operative closed, they started working for my uncle on his farm. Joba was born on that farm in 1983. As a child in the local farm school, Joba joined his mother at our farmhouse in the afternoons where he played and later worked in the garden.
>
> Joba owns a piece of land in the township, where he built himself a house. If I ask him around his feelings about owning farmland, he becomes vague other than saying he thinks it is a 'good plan'. He prefers working with me he says. I was wondering why he was too cautious to imagine this possibility – was he simply that disempowered? I was wondering if he didn't have a desire to offer his children the stability land offers.
>
> How could I assist him in acquiring his own farmland? Joba has considerable skill and knowledge in sheep farming. He has expressed a desire to build feedlots and rear sheep like that. I imagine trying to give him a sizeable portion of our land. My answer to myself is that I would find it difficult transferring a section of our farm into his name. I tend to ascribe my holding onto our land as a matter of conservatism and sentiment but when I scrutinise my reasons rationally, I come to the conclusion that I'm being pragmatic: our land is only 280 hectares in size. In our area a farm can be no smaller than 1 200 hectares to ensure the livelihood of its inhabitants. At this stage, my wife and I have occupations outside of farming that sustain us, whereas Joba is completely dependent on the farm's current income. To divide the land further will result in even smaller farming units, unable to sustain either of our families. In this vein the surveyor general in South Africa does not allow for further subdivision of a farm of our size, as with economies of scale that are necessary in agriculture, subdivision of such a small piece of land would render it completely economically unviable. To exemplify it in another industry, dividing a factory in half does not create two economically viable halves. It just renders the factory dysfunctional.
>
> Furthermore I would also like to transfer my sense of belonging to Africa to my children. This land roots them in Africa. I am therefore searching for ways of empowering Joba on this land without dividing it. Maybe he could use the access I give him to the land (I refer to this later again) to build wealth in terms of feedlots for example and purchase farmland in the vicinity.

The South African land issue is also embedded with external issues, unrelated to the restitution of land to the landless people. In our case, local government officials sell mining rights to foreign nationals without following procedure. After the officials receive a fee for the mining license, the land is mined and rendered useless for farming purposes. Another debilitating aspect of being disempowered as Joba is, is the jealousy of his contemporaries, even his own family. He relates how he can't tell his mother that I gave him a bakkie as this will result in his siblings descending on him with their very real financial woes. He will not be able to stand up to their demands and will simply be pulled back to their levels of impoverishment. Joba also has to hide the fact that we transferred the chicken business to his name for similar reasons. When friends ask him why he works so hard for the 'baas', he can't say he is the owner of the business. Joba concludes that jealousy which results from a community's poverty and interdependence mostly drives the reality of *ubuntu* out of communities. He says that the only place in his life where he experiences *ubuntu* is in his marriage and in our relationship.

This brings me to the second point of looking at the traditions of interpretation that inform our relationship. From the outside, it would seem as if Joba as employee is in a more vulnerable position in our relationship. The traditions that inform the interpretation are definitely pointing in this direction. The farmer as employer can hire and fire within legislative prescriptions. The townships are filled to the brim with unemployed exfarm labourers, many of whom simply chose a life of freedom to that of an under-valued labourer.

Joba and my relationship is markedly different from this dominant narrative which disrupts the tradition of interpretation. Joba is a self-respecting, highly talented and exceptionally hard working adult. I would be at a loss without his skills. I on the other hand I obtained my B.Div at The University of Western Cape. Here as the Chairperson of the Theological Student Council, I came to understand Liberation and Contextual Theology. When I returned home at night, it was to an informal settlement where I shared a wood and plastic shack with a Xhosa family. This experience and academic understanding of the South African racial landscape again disrupted my profile as a conservative white landowning male. Spiritually I can see how the Dutch Reformed church is limited in its theology to serve still the interests of only one language and racial group, the Afrikaners. I cannot call that my spiritual home any longer. Joba's God consciousness is informed by his Tswana worldview where the ancestors mediate and inform and yet he stands ambivalent to most of his traditions. We are both nontraditionalists with an eclectic array of thoughts and beliefs. We find common ground in our respect for human dignity.

Interdisciplinary investigation strengthens my responsibility to Joba and his family's life. Socially and economically, he has been deprived of opportunities with only a Grade 7 to his name. His opportunities to earn are limited to his manual labour. I have had a privileged childhood and education. History asks of me to assist in Joba's empowerment. My wife and I have therefore given him access to the land and handed him our broiler poultry business as a start. He now runs this business taking all the profits, having learnt the necessary skills with us, in the three-year development period when we were co-owners. He therefore has a very good knowledge of the whole production cycle from the 1-day-old chicks to marketing the fully-grown chickens in the township. Share schemes have become commonplace in the South African economy and in agriculture. Our plan is furthermore to give him shares in everything on the farm.

My central motivation for not transferring 50% of the land into Joba's name is still, as argued earlier, that our farm is too small as an economically sustainable unit to do so. Whilst land is linked to emotions, practically speaking it also has to be seen as the factory that I mentioned earlier. Dividing the farm would be a symbolic gesture that would bring no prosperity with it. Selling, or giving, the entire farm to Joba would result in my family and I leaving the land that my ancestors have worked for seven generations. Would this be of any benefit to Joba? I suspect not, and nothing that he has said gives me the idea that he would like me to leave, so that he can have the land. In fact, the opposite is true. Joba finds community and *ubuntu* in working with me, and more than that is acquiring business skills, knowledge, and ownership of the poultry business that will bring economic prosperity to him and his descendents in the long term. Currently the farm serves as a platform for Joba and me where we grow stronger together and where we both find a sense of *ubuntu* that we miss amongst our own people for different reasons. Let us see where it takes us, what the next step is. Maybe together one day we can buy a farm of more potential? What is sure is that I and other white agricultural landowners have to find concrete ways to humanise ourselves and our landless coworkers in terms of access to our land. The words of Senghor (1962) still ring true:

> Faced with this divided world on the brink of catastrophe, it is our duty to bring back the antagonists to a more reasonable state of mind. We must call on them for more humanity. (p. 190)

I found the article by Taylor informative in translating *ubuntu* into a measure of the right action. This is helpful in determining what *ubuntu* would ask of us in the context of the Land Issue. Taylor (2014:331) points to the fact that the word *ubuntu* or localised versions thereof is used in various regions of sub-Saharan Africa as a term that defines how people and communities should act in relationships. After citing many efforts at explaining what *ubuntu* is, Taylor (2014) remarks that none of these definitions describe which actions constitute *ubuntu*, but rather point to a moral quality or general characteristics of humanness and concludes with this definition:

> An action is right insofar as it promotes cohesion and reciprocal value amongst people. An action is wrong insofar as it damages relationships and devalues any individual or group. (p. 338)

Taylor's conclusion ties in with Battle (1997:40–41) where he writes that *ubuntu* enables genuine community because it confesses a universal vulnerability. As Gade (2012:416)

pronounces, the Nguni term, 'ubuntu', is generally held to stem from, and to be deeply rooted in, African indigenous cultures. This Africanness of *ubuntu* is seen as an antidote to Western individualism and often referred to during its development as an expression of African humanism, see Gade's (2011:303–329) study on the historical development of written discourses on *ubuntu*. Translating *ubuntu* into the landowners' language with words such as 'broederskap and brotherhood' may bring appropriate action to the heart of the majority of landowners and landless people.

Conclusion

I have discussed the South African Land Issue from a postfoundationalist and social-constructionist practical-theological point of view by referring to a specific context and a particular narrative. I examined various studies on the term *ubuntu* and emphasised the value of Taylor's (2014:338) conclusion for a workable definition that enables ethical action also in business, like agricultural land ownership. I suggest that by placing oneself in the shoes of the other, learning compassion, the path of action follows. The landowner placing himself in the shoes of his landless and dependent coworker and vice versa will find it easier to negotiate restorative and may I add transformative justice. This principle will assist in finding a way for landowners in the words of Shutte (2001:10) 'of living *ubuntu* in a society where the dominant culture is European, not African, and where many other cultures from other parts of the world exist together'. Du Plooy (2014) quotes Tutu to illuminate the dynamic discourse between *ubuntu* and compassion:

> Such projects, however idealistic and utopian they may be, consist of consciously controlled patterns of discursivity that provide us with powerful ways to communicate traditional wisdom but it simultaneously also calls for an 'eternal vigilance, held accountable by a critical, questioning populace. (p. 97)

Focussing on our interconnectedness and shared vulnerability, the focus shifts to people. This shift to my mind enables creativity, setting landowners and landless people alike on a road of reconciliation to find localised solutions to local problems.

Finally, I want to add that this shift does not have to depend on an esoteric event. This awakening can be the result of education. As Xulu (2010) states:

> The intangible heritage resource of *ubuntu* values is a consequence of learned behaviour. It is not too late to rekindle these values as part of nation-building. They can and should be taught in the schools, communities, civil society structures, business and government and to attain this, an appropriate context must be created. (p. 85)

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

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