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Towards a human rights culture in South Africa. The role of moral formation

ABSTRACT

In this article it is argued that the building of a human rights culture entails the fulfilment of rights through measures like the cherishing and strengthening of a vision of human dignity and human rights for all, the transformation of public policies and laws so that they can adhere to a human rights vision, the development of theories that enhance the implementation of rights, the influencing of public opinion, the mobilizing of political will, the development of an ethics of responsibility, and the strengthening of the process of moral formation. The focus of this article is on last-mentioned initiative that aims at building citizens of public virtue and character who embody the human rights vision. For human rights to be fulfilled we need right humans. With reference to the work of various authors in theology and other disciplines, especially Dutch theologian Hans van der Ven, the process of moral formation is discussed. Reference is made to issues like definitions of moral formation, pragmatic and theological rationales for moral formation, as well as to spaces and modes of moral formation.

1. TOWARDS A HUMAN RIGHTS CULTURE

The vision of a human rights culture has been cherished for a very long time by millions of South Africans. In the Freedom Charter of 1955 this vision reflects important features like non-racialism, hospitality, socio-economic liberation, security and comfort for all.

At the launch of the anti-apartheid movement, the United Democratic Front, the vision of a South African society that is based on human rights was formulated as the search for one united, undivided, non-racial, non-classist, non-sexist democratic South Africa where peace and justice reign supreme.

And eventually South Africans from a diversity of backgrounds as well as different religious and secular orientations adopted the consensus on the human rights foundations of our society as it is articulated in the Bill of Rights of the South Africa Constitution of 1996. Central elements of this human rights foundation are equality, freedom, justice, equity and especially human dignity.

Although the Bill of Rights is not an infallible document, we might state without hesitation that the vision of a human rights society is articulated very clearly in this document. Our paperwork has been completed successfully. In order to look good not only on paper, but also on the playing field, we need to work hard at the establishment of a human rights culture. This task entails that the vision of a society based on human rights be kept alive; that institutions be established and law and policy making processes and practices like theory-building, influencing of public opinion and the development of an ethics of responsibility, all of which require a lot of wisdom and discernment, be embarked upon which will ensure that all rights, i.e. so-called first (political), second (socio-economic) and third (developmental and ecological) dimension rights, be

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enforced, implemented and fulfilled[1]; and that citizens be equipped to fulfil their public responsibility to cherish and embody this human rights vision, and to participate with wisdom in the processes that serve the implementation of these rights.

A human rights culture in South Africa therefore firstly entails the adherence to the vision of a society that is built on the values of dignity, equality, freedom, justice and equity. It secondly refers to the institutions, measures, processes, discourses and practices that are established to ensure the implementation and embodiment of the vision of a human rights society. And thirdly a human rights culture has in mind the development of citizens of public virtue and character in all walks of life who participate in keeping this human rights vision alive and in embodying it.

The next section of this paper attempts to offer a definition of moral formation that will show the relevance of this process for the building of a human rights culture.

2. MORAL FORMATION?

a) The theological discourse about moral formation offers helpful insights. Dutch theologian and human rights scholar, Johannes van der Ven, describes moral formation as the informal and formal education process that aims at developing people of character who embody what Paul Ricoeur calls, the good, the right and the wise. Van der Ven pleads for a relationship of complementarity between these three. Van der Ven describes the complementarity between the criterion of the good, i.e. virtue and character ethics, and the criterion of the right, i.e. duty ethics as follows:

"Whereas virtue ethics is oriented toward one's desires in one's own situation within one's own community, which indicates the ends being strived for and the means to these ends, duty ethics is concerned with acts to be performed according to universal moral rules and principles. Virtue ethics is about personal dispositions, duty ethics about universal or at least universalizable norms; virtue ethics has to do with the person himself/herself, duty ethics with the person's acts. The two

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1   South African journalist, Allister Sparks, described our progress toward these aims almost a decade after the dawn of inclusive democracy in a very remarkable way: "Looking back after nine years, almost a decade, one can credit the new South Africa with many excellent achievements. We have entrenched a new democratic Constitution, perhaps the most progressive in the world, and bedded it down through four national, provincial and local elections, which have been manifestly peaceful and fair. We have a Constitutional Court presided over by world-class jurists to interpret and defend it, and we have established a number of other institutions to give effect to the Constitution, including an Independent Electoral Commission, a Human Rights Commission and a Commission for Gender Equality. Not least we have managed a smooth transition from the Founding Father of our new nation to his young successor in a continent where this is rare. We have scrapped all the old race laws, guaranteed freedom of speech and the press, abolished the death penalty, legalized abortion on demand, protected the rights of gay people, and advanced women in many spheres of life. We have brought clean water to more than 9 million people who did not have it before, electricity to more than 2 million, and telephones – that vital connection to the new Information Age – to 1,5 million. We have integrated, at least nominally, more than 30 000 public schools that used to be racially segregated, as well as all the country's universities and other institutions of higher learning, raised the literacy rate of 15-to-24-year-olds to 95%, and brought free health care to millions of children. We have ended diplomatic isolation and rejoined the community of nations to play an influential role on the international stage. We have resuscitated an economy that was on it's deathbed, restoring fiscal discipline, cutting the budget deficit, reducing the national debt, bringing inflation down from double figures to within a target range of 3% to 6%, slashing interest rates from a high of 24% under apartheid to 14% prime; lifting trade barriers, removing a maze of tariffs and import duties, and generally winning universal praise for establishing a sound macroeconomic base from which hopefully to build future prosperity. It is indeed another country" (Sparks 2003:3-4).

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are not in competition because they are, as Frankena states, 'two complementary aspects of the same morality'" (Van der Ven 1998:344).[2]

Van der Ven therefore appreciates Ricoeur's development of an additional criterion on the basis of viewing the relationship between the good and the right as complementary. Ricoeur proposes a three-phase model. The good has primacy over the right, because the good is embedded in the community in which we live, the tradition from which we are fed and the context by which we are shaped. They form the house that we inhabit. In a second phase the values and norms that constitute the good must be scrutinized, evaluated, and, if necessary, purified by putting them before the judge of justice and passing them through the 'sieve of the right'. The universal principles of justice that serve as criteria for testing the good transcend community- and context-bound values and norms. The third phase of Ricoeur's model, which Van der Ven calls a form of situation ethics, entails that the good, which have been scrutinized and purified by the right, must be applied in the concrete situation. In this phase the specific circumstances that characterize this situation is considered, amongst others its singularity, fragility and tragedy. This endeavour requires the criterion of the wise, which refers to practical-moral wisdom, moral wisdom in situation.

Van der Ven's understanding of moral formation does have a lot of potential in a pluralistic society like South Africa where moral formation is the joint venture of people from a diversity of religious and secular orientations. In various spheres of society (political, economical, civil society, public opinion formation) we can cooperate in the process of moral formation, of becoming people of virtue and character who embody the good, right and wise.

Various religious traditions offer so-called thicker or religion-based descriptions of moral formation. Dietrich Bonhoeffer is a Christian theologian who describes the aim of moral formation as conformation to Jesus Christ. This implies that moral formation entails the transformation of humans so that we increasingly conform to Jesus Christ. Our emotions, thoughts, desires, attitudes, motivation, will, inclinations, tendencies and predispositions are transformed so that it increasingly reflects those of Jesus Christ.[3]

The concept of moral formation is also increasingly used in the circles of the World Council of Churches. In the quest for greater unity between the Faith and Order and Life and Work sections, between the ecclesiology and ethics themes, the notion of moral formation is important.

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2   Van der Ven (1998:344-345) also indicates that virtue ethicists view virtue ethics, unlike duty ethics, as thick and not thin, substantive and not procedural, particular and not absolute, maximal and not minimal ethics. For them virtue ethics enjoy priority. Duty ethics are both the common denominator and derivative of virtue and character ethics. In an ethical Venn diagram duty ethics constitutes the intersection of sets of character ethics from different communities. Duty ethicists on the other hand, view virtue ethics as sociocentric, ethnocentric, language dependent, community bound, context-directed, tradition-oriented, accidental and relative. They only have binding authority if their principles and rules are universalizable. Virtue ethics is provisional and needs to be questioned and tried against universal criteria of reducing oppression and alienation and advancing emancipation and solidarity. For an extensive argument in favour of a relationship of complementarity between virtue and duty ethics, see N Koopman, *Dade of deugde? Implikasies vir Suid-Afrikaanse kerke van 'n modern-postmoderne debat oor die moraliteit* (2000). Bellville: Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of the Western Cape.

3   See D Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (2005). Besides the word formation, moral education, "Bildung" in German, and *paideia* are also employed to refer to the creation of human beings who live a life that is oriented to the good, right and wise. For a collection of articles that deals with *paideia* as the formation of citizens in democratic societies, see AM Olson, DM Steiner and IS Tuuli, *Educating for democracy. Paideia in an age of uncertainty* (2004). Oxford: Roman and Littlefield Publishers.

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In this context where the church is increasingly not viewed as an institution that has a social, but that is a social ethic, moral formation entails the formation of people who embody costly unity, costly commitment and costly obedience in their joint doctrine, ethics and witness.

b) The perspectives on moral formation portrayed above, guard against the negative associations with the idea of moral formation. Van der Ven develops a model of moral formation which convincingly demonstrates the public dimension and importance of ethics with a personal focus, in this case virtue ethics. He demonstrates how a focus on the formation of people with virtue and character can enhance the process of building a society where justice in all its forms are adhered to and where human rights ideals are materialised. Bonhoeffer's definition implies that moral formation is an active process. It involves continuous transformation. It has a clear goal in mind, namely Christoformity. Moral formation in this context does not imply that some people know exactly what the right vision, decisions and virtues are, and that they now form others to be like that. And even less does moral formation mean that some had achieved the aim of moral formation and they now work hard on others to achieve this as well. No, moral formation according to Bonhoeffer and the ecumenical movement, makes room for moral ambiguity and uncertainty; it knows very well that moral guidance is obtained from the communion with Christ and his church where moral sources like Scripture, tradition, reason, experience and human conscience are respected; moreover it acknowledges that moral formation is not a human achievement, but it is the work of the Triune God in which humans participate. These theological understandings of moral formation also oppose the idea that moral formation implies a form of force and conditioning of people. To oppose accusations like the ones mentioned here, Robert Vosloo and I used the concept moral orientation in our publication on Christian ethics.[4] Moral formation can also go wrong. It can serve morally wrong, bad and unwise purposes. In such situations we can talk about moral malformation. This observation is important because it makes us aware of the fact that a lot of moral formation for the good or for the bad is already taking place. To distinguish last-mentioned outcomes the word moral formation will be used in this article only in the positive sense of formation for what is good, right and wise. Despite the risks in the term moral formation, I still prefer to use this term since it is indeed the more established one in academic and popular moral discourse.

c) In the context of the South African democracy one could describe moral formation as the transformation of people or citizens so that our attitudes, thinking, desires, inclinations and predispositions increasingly reflect the values of the Bill of Rights. Such transforming persons participate in the transformation of societal visions and ideals, structures, policies and public, as well as personal practices so that they cohere with the vision and values of the Bill of Rights. In the context of the democratic public sphere the process of moral formation aims at the development of citizens with civic or public virtue. Within various religious traditions the aim of moral formation will entail a thicker or broader moral content and it will be expressed in different ways. According to Bonhoeffer the aim of moral formation in Christian communities, for instance, would be Christoformity. Religious people, who adhere to such thicker moral aims, are challenged to participate fruitfully in achieving the so-called thinner aim of moral formation in pluralistic democratic public spaces.[5]

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4   See N Koopman and R Vosloo, *Die ligtheid van die lig. Morele oriëntasie in 'n postmoderne tyd* (2002). Wellington: Lux Verbi-BM.

5   For an outline of the unique nature of Christian morality, and for definitions of thick and thin, broad and narrow, minimum and maximum moralities, see N Koopman, "The role of tradition in moral decision making." *NGTT* March 2005, pp. 838 – 848.

In the next section we investigate the appeals from various circles for moral formation as the formation of citizens with public virtue.

3. MORAL FORMATION – A PLEA FOR VIRTUOUS CITIZENSHIP

a) The appeal for moral formation in society is made from various circles in societies all over the world. In the American context, James Fowler[6] lists various manifestations of moral malformation which cause America to become an uncivil society, e.g. the neglect of children; the preference in the electronic media of hard-heartedness and violence to tenderness, fidelity and empathetic understanding; stigmatization of other races; economic inequalities; ecological damage; the failure to maintain standards of basic decency; religion as force that contributes to conflict over issues like abortion, school prayer, and homosexuality, and that does not contribute to achieving economic justice, tolerance, civility and ecological responsibility. Dutch scholar, John Sap,[7] refers to the growing appeal for moral formation since the mid-1990s by various political groupings in the Netherlands. They make this appeal against the background of the loss of moral orientation and a "norms and values vacuum." This appeal is echoed in various circles of South African society.

b) Various theologians and scholars of other disciplines appeal for moral formation as the process of developing citizenship. James Fowler[8] describes the importance of moral nurturing for citizenship. He specifically emphasises the indispensable role of churches and other religious organisations in this process. American Roman Catholic theologian, Christopher Mooney, appeals to churches to be public in the sense of providing a moral vision that transforms private virtue with its emphasis of self-interest to public virtue that serves the common good.[9]

The importance of moral citizenship for democracies, receive much attention in current political thought. Political philosopher Will Kymlicka[10], amongst others, explains how prominent the idea of moral citizenship has become in contemporary political thought. According to him political thought in the 1970s was characterized by liberal individualism. The concepts of justice and rights were proposed as alternatives to a utilitarian approach. In the 1980s communitarian thinking became prominent. In the attempt to show that liberal individualism could not account for or sustain the communal sentiments, identities and boundaries required for feasible political community, terms like community and membership were emphasized. In the 1990s the idea of citizenship developed as an attempt to transcend the opposition between liberal individualism and communitarianism. Citizenship theory makes space both for liberal ideas of rights and entitlements, as well as communitarian ideas of membership in and attachment to a particular

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6   See J Fowler, *Faithful change. The personal and public challenges of postmodern life* (1996): Nashville: Abingdon Press, pp. 222-228.

7   See JW Sap, *Decency versus justice. The call for morality in The Netherlands* (1997). Assen: Van Gorcum, p.3.

8   See J Fowler, ibid.

9   CF Mooney, *Public virtue. Law and the social character of religion* (1986). Notre dame: University of Notre Dame Press, p. 20. For a collection of essays that deal theologically with the appeal that democracies need citizens who embody civic virtue, human excellence, common decency, public responsibility and civic engagement, see TW Boxx and GM Quinlivan (eds), *Public morality, civic virtue, and the problem of modern liberalism* (2000). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

10   See W Kymlicka *Contemporary political philosophy. An introduction* (2002). Oxford/New York: Qxford University Press, p. 284 – 285.

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community. Kymlicka argues that both theoretical and political considerations[11] indicate that the health and stability of a modern democracy depends not only on the justice of its institutions, but also on the qualities and attitudes of its citizens. He mentions some of these qualities and attitudes: " … their sense of identity, and how they view potentially competing forms of national, regional, ethnic, or religious identities; their ability to tolerate and work together with others who are different from themselves; their desire to participate in the political process in order to promote the public good and hold political authorities accountable; their willingness to show self-restraint and exercise personal responsibility in their economic demands, and in personal choices which affect their health and the environment. Without citizens who possess these qualities, democracies become difficult to govern, even unstable" (2002:285).[12]

c) Another North American theologian, J Philip Wogaman,[13] provides a helpful theological motivation for the process of moral formation. This motivation is important since especially Protestant Christians traditionally are sceptical about attempts to emphasize the human participation in processes like moral formation. They rightfully oppose works righteousness. The anthropological dimensions of moral formation, however, do not stand in conflict with the pneumatological side thereof.

Through an analysis of major Christian doctrines Wogaman concludes that an appreciation for and the encouragement of moral formation as both a theological and anthropological activity, i.e. an endeavour in which human beings participate with the Triune God is supported by Christian theology. As persons created in the image of God human beings do have capabilities of authority, freedom, creativity, rationality and relationality that enable them to participate in moral formation. Our sinful nature, inclinations and practices, however, contaminate even our best efforts. Participation in moral formation therefore asks for humility and the recognition of our sinfulness, finitude and also the acknowledgement of the broken, tragic and *aporetic* nature of existence. We are, however, declared righteous by the gracious God in terms of the work of atonement of Jesus Christ and through faith in Him. The Holy Spirit renews us in the process of sanctification. This Trinitarian work of creation, salvation and renewal rightly forms for Wogaman the basis of our participation in a process like moral formation.

c) In South African society a plea is made to churches to participate, in partnership with other

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11   Besides these theoretical developments, Kymlicka refers to various political factors all over the world that had prompted the idea of citizenship: i.e. increasing voter apathy and long-term welfare dependency in the USA; the resurgence of nationalist movements in Eastern Europe; stresses created by an increasingly multicultural and multiracial population in Western Europe; the backlash against the welfare state in Thatcher's England; the failure of environmental policies that rely on voluntar citizenship cooperation; disaffection with globalization and the perceived loss of national sovereignty. See W Kymlicka 2002: 284.

12   William Galston (1991:221-224) has compiled a very influential list of four categories of civic virtues that enable democracies to flourish, namely general virtues (courage, law-abidingness and loyalty), social virtues (independence and open-mindedness), economic virtues (work ethic, capacity to delay self-gratification, adaptability to economic and technological change) and political virtues (capacity to discern and respect the rights of others, willingness to demand only what can be paid for, ability to evaluate the performance of those in office, willingness to engage in public discourse). In his influential study on the role of civil society in Italy Robert Putnam (1993) argues that the success of regional governments was related to the civic virtue, or social capital, of citizens, amongst others their ability to trust, to participate in public life and their sense of justice. Although they had the same institutions, the various post-war regional governments achieved different levels of success. Putnam contributes these differences not to the different income and education levels of citizens, but to differences in civic virtue and social capital.

13   JP Wogaman, *Christian moral judgment* London: SCM Press. (1979), chapter 2.

institutions in society, in the process of moral formation. Besides their Trinitarian theological potential for moral formation, they also are sociologically spoken, the institution of civil society which is the best equipped to participate in this process, i.e. they have good access to people, even the most marginalized ones; they have well-trained staff; they enjoy much trust; they have good buildings all over the country.

After this attempt at an understanding of moral formation, as well as a brief reference to the practical and theological appeals for moral formation, Van der Ven's concrete proposals regarding the process of moral formation will be investigated briefly in order to infer some lessons for the process of moral formation in South African society.

4. VAN DER VEN ON MORAL FORMATION

Van der Ven (1998) identifies seven modes of moral formation, namely discipline, socialization, transmission, development, clarification, emotional formation and education for character. He has worked for numerous years on the theme of moral formation.[14] Van der Ven's work is of importance for the discourse about moral formation in South Africa.[15]

He acknowledges other attempts to identify modes of moral formation. He refers to his earlier works in which he formulated different modes. He earlier identified four modes of moral formation, namely transmission, cognitive development, clarification and communication. Although he implied them in these modes he now argues that he had neglected the modes of discipline, socialization, emotional formation and character formation. He reckons that they indeed should be relatively independent modes. Another development in his thinking about modes is that communication should not be an independent mode, but that it is actually the common

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14 Besides *Formation of the moral self* other related important publications by Van der Ven are: " Naar een nieuwe moraalpedagogiek." In *Waarden en normen in het onderwijs, Vrijheid en onderwijs* (1980). Baarn: Ten Have, pp. 26-45; *Kritische godsdienstdidactiek* (1982). Kampen: Kok; *Vorming in waarden en normen* (1985). Kampen: Kok; "Diagnose und Therapie in der Werterziehung." In E Paul and A Stock,(eds) *Glauben Ermöglichen*, (1987a), Mainz), pp.277-285; "Moral Formation in the Church", in: *Concilium* 1987b, 191/3, p. 117-127; "Matigheid in de morele vorming." In *Philosophica* 1992, 49/1, pp. 29-54; *Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach* (1993a). Kampen: Kok; "Religion and the Quality of Life." In U Nembach (ed), *Informationes Theologiae Europae* (1993b) Frankfurt), pp. 319-40; "The Religious and Moral Self as a Process." In H Pieterse (ed), *Desmond Tutu's Message: A Qualitative Analysis.* Serie Theology en Empirie (1994) 24. Kampen: Kok, pp. 74-95; *Ecclesiology in Context* (1996a), Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; *Botsende culturen in Nederland?* (1996b), Kampen: Kok; *Pastoraal perspectief: vorming tot reflectief pastoraat* (2000), Kampen: Kok; JS Dreyer and JA van der Ven, *Divine justice – human justice* (…). Pretoria: Research Institute for Theology and Religion. – this article makes use of *Formation* (1998), since that publication represents Van der Ven's more mature thinking on this the theme of moral formation. This book does not only deal with more modes of moral formation than earlier ones, it also takes the work of Paul Ricoeur as determinative for the understanding of morality, which earlier works did not. An important publication on the work of Van der Ven, which mostly focuses on his empirical approach to theology, i.e. his attempt to discover empirically believe about God, Christ, the Spirit, the church and a just society, is the Festschrift that focuses on the humanity of God: H-G Ziebertz, F Schweitzer, H Haring and D Browning (eds), *The human image of God* (2001), Leiden:Brill.

15 Two Reformed pastors in South Africa are currently writing doctoral dissertations on the work of Van der Ven. Hennie Jack, who had just completed his studies, focused on the mode of discipline and Natie Philander is focusing on socialisation. Both of them express appreciation for Van der Ven's work. Van der Ven works in an interdisciplinary way; he makes ample use of very good sources from philosophical and theological ethics, sociology, anthropology, psychology, education etc.; his analysis is not based on so-called First World situations only, but also on the stance of morality and moral formation in other parts of the world, especially South Africa where he is involved in various projects on public morality and

denominator of all modes. His understanding outlined above indeed forms part of the helpful framework within which he develops modes of moral formation.

Some important distinctions regarding the modes of moral formation need to be recognized. According to Van der Ven,[16] some modes are informal and others formal. Informal moral education refers to the education processes that occur in groups and networks that are not primarily set up for educational purposes, e.g. the family, neighbourhood, associations, churches, etc. Two modes of Van der Ven's resort to in this informal paradigm, namely discipline[17] and socialization.[18] Formal education refers to the educational processes in the moral realm that take place in organizations that had been established primarily for the purpose of systematically methodically coordinating educational activities, formalizing educational tasks and responsibilities, exercising professional leadership in the field of education, and explicitly legitimizing its educational structures, procedures, and processes. The organizations where this formal education takes place at primary, secondary, tertiary and adult and continuous education levels. Besides for public and private schools and various institutions of higher education, these formal processes are also organized by some (of the practices and activities of) associations, churches and other institutions. Transmission, development, clarification and character formation resort in the paradigm of formal moral education. Van der Ven emphasises that these two approaches should not be neatly separated as if they are two entirely separate phenomena. They are dialectically related to each other. Formal processes form the conditions for the formal ones, and informal processes explicate, differentiate

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values; and very importantly his views on moral formation takes not only the moral living in individual context seriously, but he also focuses on communal living in primary groups and communities, and the broader pluralistic and multicultural society. These two researchers express appreciation for the methodology of Van der Ven (i.e. his views on: morality, religion, the relationship between morality and religion, education, communication and his understanding and cataloguing of seven modes of moral formations) as discussed in this paper. Both of them use Van de Ven's ideas to develop their own constructive theories on discipline and socialization in ecclesial contexts in South Africa. They acknowledge that Van der Ven did not intend to focus only on the role of churches in moral formation. Although he does not focus on the church and moral formation in his book, he appreciates the important role of the church. He for instance is of opinion that the church has a fourfold function: to give identity (i.e. conviction, selfunderstanding and a sense of vocation); to enhance integration (i.e. cohesion, uniformity and pluriformity); to promote ecclesial programmes of development and political involvement; to establish good administrative measures (*Verwaltung*) regarding personnel and finances in the church. See JA van der Ven, *Kontextuelle Ekklesiologie* (1995). Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, p. 96.

Jack explored the potential of ecclesiology and pneumatology in developing discipline as habituation and self regulation, and in creating a spirit of discipline, i.e. a spirit conducive to the development of discipline. He investigates the role of the Spirit and of the community of faith, i.e. the church, in the development of discipline. Philander investigates the potential of church practices for socialization, i.e. for the formation of people of character who live as dialogical selves on the levels of the individual, community and pluralistic and multicultural society. He argues that practices as communal, co-ordinated, coherent, consistent activities that developed over centuries in the Christian tradition, can fulfil a crucial and indispensable role in moral formation as socialization. He, amongst others, emphasises the practice of moral heroism, i.e. of role models, saints, examples, in the Christian tradition.

16   See Van der Ven 1998:36-38.
17   Discipline aims at habituation and self-regulation in such a way that the spirit of discipline is internalised by the child in an atmosphere of open, reciprocal communication. See Van der Ven ibid, 38.
18   Socialization aims at the internalization of the values and norms that determine the communities that people belong to. Since the values of communities that we belong to are in conflict in pluralistic societies, socialization enhances the development of the dialogical self, i.e. of a person who is capable of communicating with people from other communities within a pluralistic and multicultural society, with other people (interpersonal), with him or herself (intrapersonal) in order to make choices, make decisions and reach compromises. See Van der Ven, ibid.

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and explicate at a higher developmental level the subject matter covered in the informal processes. It is important that Van der Ven mentions this dialectical and complementary nature of the relationship between the informal and formal modes. Without this qualification this distinction could not have been defended.

Van der Ven[19] also refers to another distinction regarding formal moral education processes. These modes are cognitively, experientially and emotionally based, respectively. Transmission and development are mainly cognitively based. Clarification is experientially based and emotional formation is based in affective categories.[20]

The culmination point of moral formation is character formation. For Van der Ven education for character is the highest aim of moral formation. He does not use character in the sense of an old-fashioned, ascetic, will-driven, rigid form of education that suppresses the potential of people to think, experience and especially feel freely. He uses the term in the interactive and narrative meaning it enjoys in contemporary virtue and character ethical discourse.[21] Contemporary virtue and character ethics interprets Aristotle's character ethics from the perspective of post-Enlightenment pluralistic and multicultural societies. According to Van der Ven[22] people with character are not fixed selves, but open and true selves, self-determined thinkers who develop their own judgements and cause their own actions for which they think responsibility. They do not deduce rules for the concrete situation from a fixed and static, as Kohlberg calls it, "bag of virtues," that had been inculcated in them. Character and virtue are developed in the dynamic interaction between person and situation. The abstract nature of virtue and character leaves room for individual and situational differences to influence the choice and performance of moral actions. The plurality of virtues helps to deal more constructively with the plurality of individuals and situations in moral life. Virtues as orientations and not fixed guidelines, frees moral formation from the connotation of rigid training programmes, fixed rules, punitive habit formation and inhuman coercion, and also from moralism, manipulation and oppressive forms of modelling. We did indicate earlier that Van der Ven pleads for a complementary relationship between virtue and duty approaches to morality. In fact, in his understanding of morality people of character embody the categories of the good, right and wise.

Although the various modes of Van der Ven are relatively independent, they are related to each other. They jointly enhance the formation of persons of virtue and character, of moral selves (who are not understood in individualistic and independent manner, but in interactionist and communicative manner), who adhere to the moral categories of the good, right and wise in all walks of life, i.e. in the spheres of the individual, the community, the society with all its institutions, the pluralistic society with its plurality of moral convictions, as well as the

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19   See Van der Ven ibid, 38-39.

20   Clarification introduces people more consciously and deeply to the moral and religious traditions of their communities. Development does not focus on this extrinsic content of the traditions, but on the intrinsic structure of people's developing moral judgement. Clarification as an experiential approach focuses on how people experience good and bad in their own lives, how they choose between right and wrong in their own decision making processes, how they put values and norms into practice in their own activities, and consequently assist people to clarify their own values. With an appeal to moral psychology emotional formation enables people to find moral nourishment in emotions like love, justice, guilt and shame. See Van der Ven ibid, pp. 38-39.

21   See Van der Ven 1998:40-41. For an account of concepts like virtue and character, see N Koopman "This is how he is. Beyers Naudé. A man of character and virtue." In L Hansen (ed), *The legacy of Beyers Naudé* (2005). Stellenbosch: Sun Press, pp. 153-170.

22   See Van der Ven 1998:341-344.

multicultural society with its even more complex forms of pluralistic morality. Towards this end each mode makes a unique and indispensable contribution. In Van der Ven's description and evaluation of these modes, which cannot be critically considered in depth in this article, the unique contribution of each mode to the formation of these moral selves become clear.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that Van der Ven's approach to moral formation is helpful for the discourse on moral formation in South African society.

We affirm his aim for moral formation, namely the formation of moral selves, i.e. people of character for whom the ethical categories of the good, the right and the wise constitute the framework within which they live a flourishing life, and contribute to human flourishing. This takes place in all spheres of life, i.e. on the level of the individual, community, as well as on the level of the pluralistic and multicultural society.

Appreciation is also expressed for Van der Ven's use of Ricouer's ethical model of the good, right and the wise. In South African moral discourse the first two aspects, that of the good life and that of rights and justice receive much attention. However, we are challenged to give more attention to the category of the wise, to the challenge to make more clear decisions in concrete situations. I believe we can give more attention to this technical aspect of ethical reflection that the category of the wise pleads for.[23]

Van der Ven's conviction that religion has a crucial role to fulfil in public life, and that the contribution of religion to our understanding of morality and to moral formation be acknowledged, also enjoys support.

Finally, it can be mentioned that Van der Ven's analysis offers assistance to various agents of moral formation. Besides churches, families, neighbourhoods, associations, sport and cultural bodies and other institutions of civil society, as well as the media,[24] political and economic institutions can also make fruitful use of his work. Each of these institutions can utilize Van der Ven's work to develop constructive theories and frameworks for the process of moral formation.[25]

To embody the human rights vision of documents like the Freedom Charter and the South African Bill of Rights, moral formation within the framework described in this paper does have an indispensable contribution to make.

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23 In various articles I have used the identification of four varieties of moral discourse that are identified by American ethicist James Gustafson to demonstrate the importance of the technical mode of ethical reflection. Gustafson distinguishes among the interdependent prophetic, narrative, technical and policy moral discourses. In the context of our young democracy we are challenged to give more attention to the policy and technical discourses.

24 In her evaluation of Van der Ven's approach Dutch scholar, B Smit, is of opinion that Van der Ven neglects the importance of the media in moral formation. See B Smi, *Handreiking: vorming en ontwikkeling op het terrein van moraal en godsdiens: analyse van JA van der Ven's "Het morele zelf"*. Unpublished doctoral script (2002), Theological University of Kampen I, however, reckon that although Van der Ven does not mention the media explicitly, his ideas are very helpful for a pertinent focus on the role of the media in moral formation.

25 Ample use is made of Van der Ven's views on moral formation in the Ethical Leadership Project of the Western Cape government in South Africa in which the Beyers Naudé Centre for Public Theology and various other role players are involved.

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Towards a human rights culture in South Africa. The role of moral formation

KEY WORDS
Moral formation
Human rights culture
Right humans
Virtue
Character

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